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THE TIMES

40p

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Ulster chooses hope over hate

Courage has triumphed, says Blair as two governments and eight political parties sign up to a new future

By MARTIN FLETCHER, CHIEF IRELAND CORRESPONDENT AND PHILIP WEBSTER, POLITICAL EDITOR

TONY BLAIR declared last night that "courage has triumphed" as two governments and eight political parties signed up to a new future for Northern Ireland.

He hailed a settlement that would give everyone the chance to live in peace and raise their children free from the shadow of fear.

The accord brings the Unionist and nationalist traditions — including Sinn Féin — together in fresh political structures that offer the hope of ending 30 years of bloodshed that have cost 3,200 lives. There will be a new power-sharing Northern Ireland assembly, institutions linking the North with the Republic, the start of arms decommissioning and the conditional release of all paramilitary prisoners. And for the first time, the Republic has accepted that Northern Ireland will remain in the UK for as long as a majority desire it; at the same time those who believe in a united Ireland have the means to make their case by persuasion and not violence.

President Clinton, who made a critical intervention in



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in a tense meeting and also asked for an assurance that the agreement's passages on decommissioning meant that the process of giving up arms should be started straightaway. Mr Blair's initial assurances that that was what the deal meant clearly failed to satisfy Mr Trimble's party and word spread around the Stormont complex that the whole agreement might be scuppered.

home in Northern Ireland, are. A 108-member assembly with ten parliamentary constituencies each electing six members this June under a single transferable vote system of proportional representation.

The assembly's ministers will meet Irish ministers in a new council. This will have six cross border bodies to implement ministers' decisions in areas that the assembly must agree by October or be disbanded. The assembly will decide how much autonomy its ministers should have.

Mr Trimble and Mr Adams could almost certainly sit together on a new 12 member executive drawn from the assembly.

Dublin will end its constitutional claim to Northern Ireland.

Paramilitary prisoners will be released within two or three years provided their organisations maintain their ceasefire.

A new British-Irish Council will bring together representatives of the British and Irish Governments and the new Northern Ireland, Welsh and Scottish assemblies.

Mr Blair recalled how he had said he felt the hand of history: "Today I hope that the burden of history can at last start to be lifted from our shoulders," he said. "Even now this will not work unless in your will and your mind you make it work — unless you extend the hand of friendship to those who were once your foes. It will take more of the courage we have shown. But it need not mean more of the pain. We have carried out the will of the overwhelming majority of the people of Northern Ireland, the chance to live in peace and to raise their children out of the shadow of fear."

Mr Trimble, who was praised throughout by Mr Blair and others for joining the talks, shrugged off his party divisions. He said: "We



Bertie Ahern, the Irish Prime Minister, left, and Tony Blair shake hands after announcing a settlement yesterday

rise from this table knowing that the Union is stronger than when we sat down... the struggle that has lasted 12 years for justice and equality for Unionists in this land has succeeded."

Mr Adams, whose party conference will vote on the

deal next Saturday, signalled his support when he said: "Republicans and nationalists will come to this document some with scepticism, most with hope. They will ask whether it offers a chance for the way forward. And when we have democratically come to a conclusion we will tell the world."

Mr Ahern said the agreement "marks a new beginning for all of us. Today is about the promise of a bright future: a day when we hope a line can be drawn under a bloody past."

THE MAIN POINTS

- A Northern Ireland Assembly made up of 108 members, six elected by PR from each of the existing 18 Westminster constituencies
- A First Minister and Deputy First Minister, likely to be David Trimble, as leader of the largest party, and John Hume, leader of the SDLP, as deputy
- The Assembly would have powers to legislate and take over the running of government departments such as agriculture and education
- Its first responsibility would be to set up a North-South Ministerial Council to direct co-operation on a series of issues. The Assembly will be suspended if it does not establish the co-operative body within a year
- A new British-Irish Council. Members will be drawn from the Northern Ireland Assembly, the British and Irish Governments, and devolved bodies in Wales and Scotland
- The Irish Government will amend Articles 2 and 3 of its constitution, which lay claim to Northern Ireland. London will repeal the 1920 Government of Ireland Act
- The British Government will reduce numbers of police and armed forces and remove security installations
- All participants will reaffirm commitment to decommissioning of weapons and to work with Independent International Commission on Decommissioning
- An Independent Commission will be established on the future of policing in Northern Ireland

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Two die in worst floods for 50 years

By ADRIAN LEE AND HELEN JOHNSTONE

TWO people died and two were feared drowned yesterday as the worst floods for more than 50 years hit the Midlands and East Anglia.

The Bank Holiday was washed out by rain and snow-falls of up to three inches. Roads and public transport were in chaos and the sporting programme was badly hit. More than 30 communities were put on flood warning last night as rivers threatened to burst their banks.

A 14-year-old boy was washed out of a milkman's delivery van when it was swept off the road, at Eathorpe, near Leamington Spa, Warwickshire. The driver, who had been trying to negotiate abandoned cars early yesterday, managed to scramble free and was treated for hypothermia.

Paramedics could not reach the submerged van and police said hope was fading for the teenager from Coventry who was earning pocket money during his school holiday. The Army and sniffer dogs joined the search.

An elderly woman who was found dead inside a flooded house in Northampton is be-

lieved to have drowned as floodwaters overwhelmed her as she slept. Police said she was in her 80s.

The body of a middle-aged man was recovered from the flooded River Mead caravan site near Evesham in Hereford and Worcester. Water levels there rose by 15 feet, exceeding the previous record set during the great floods of

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1947. It is thought the victim drowned or suffered a heart attack as he tried to escape a torrent of water from which 26 other people were rescued. Two other people were still unaccounted for.

A 33-year-old woman who fell off a narrowboat into the swollen waters of the River Nene, near Northampton, was also feared drowned.

Hundreds of residents in Leamington, Banbury, Buckingham, Newport Pagnell, Northampton and Evesham were evacuated. Last night

parts of Oxford were also under threat. The Environment Agency said areas affected were suffering the worst flooding in living memory. Red alerts were issued along most of the River Avon, the River Cherwell in Oxfordshire, and for the first time in 25 years, the River Great Ouse in Oxfordshire.

In Southam, Warwickshire, 1,000 people were evacuated from their homes and spent the night in a local school.

The A1 was closed between Peterborough and Brampton in Cambridgeshire, the A14 was shut at Huntingdon, and hundreds of trains were cancelled. Passengers on those that did get through faced long delays: the London-to-Glasgow sleeper arrived eight hours late. Virgin Trains said it might have to suspend services if flooding around Rugby worsened.

Temperatures fell to -9C in the Highlands and there were snowfalls in Devon and the Midlands.

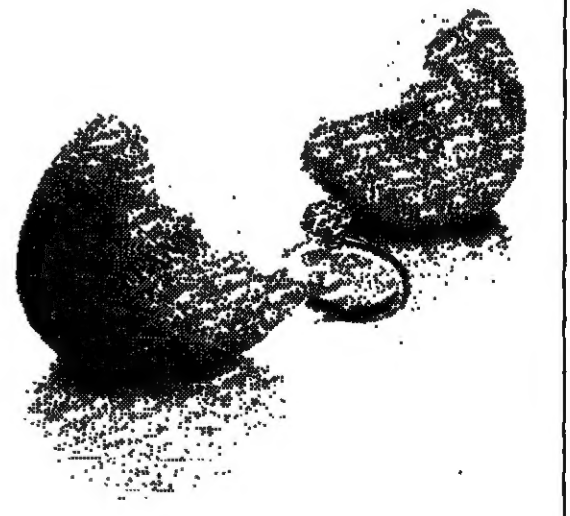
The AA said many people appeared to have heeded advice not to travel and had abandoned Easter breaks. Those flying abroad for respite



Wash-out: one man and his dog in Cropredy, Oxfordshire

faced unsettled weather in most of Europe. Forecasters said the slow-moving front which saturated central England would bring more rain. Clearer, cold weather would follow later today.

The Meteorological Office predicted that flooding over the whole country will worsen considerably before the end of Easter as rain over the hills drains to areas of lower ground by Monday.



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By HELEN JOHNSTONE AND ADRIAN LEE

In Evesham, one of the towns worst affected by the flooding of the River Avon,

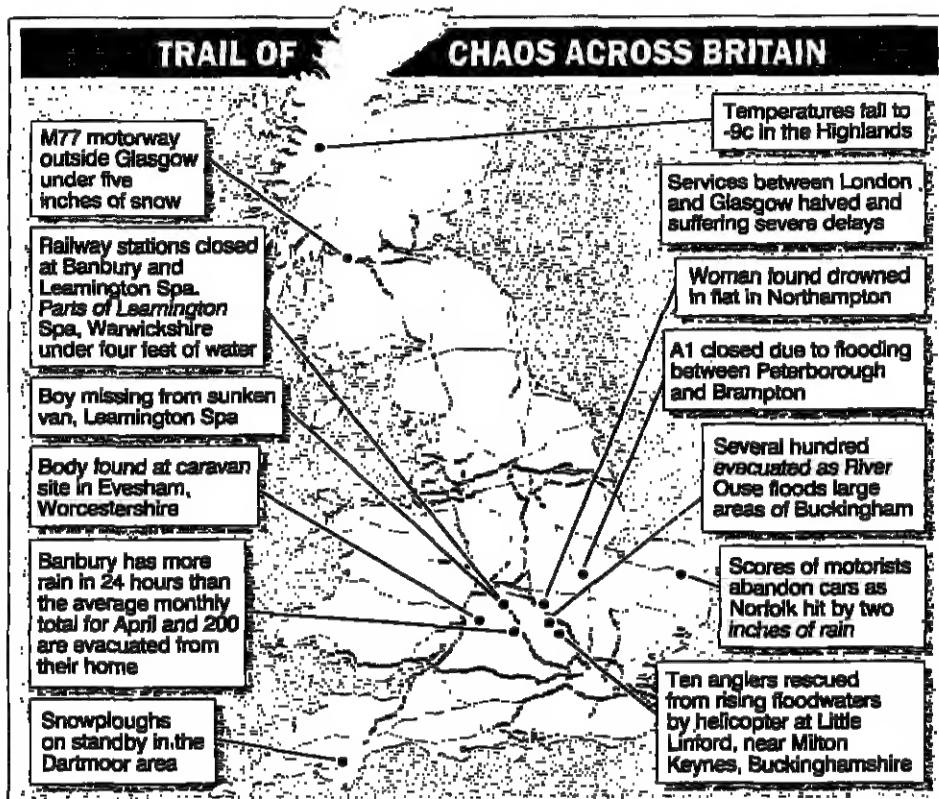
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By VICTORIA FLETCHER

A spokesman said the long-range forecast last weekend had said that up to two inches

Forecast, page 30



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How they woke up to the great flood

New lakes, a boat like the Ark, and cancelled trains

By JOANNA BAILE

RETURNING to her Banbury apartment after a night at her mother's, Sue Dawes was ill-prepared for the sight that met her eyes. As she walked around the corner into Victoria Place, a smart new modern development, she was stopped in her tracks by a vast lake which filled the courtyard leading to her front door.

Dotted around were the roofs of half-submerged cars and two of her neighbours were forlornly wading through the knee-deep floodwaters in Wellingtons. Miss Dawes, 20, who had gone to her mother's after getting stranded on the M40 on her way home from work, gasped in horror, then whipped off her designer trainers, exclaiming: "The water might have ruined my flat, but there's no point ruining my trainers as well."

After wading to her door in stockinged feet, she was delighted to discover that the water, which was subsiding fast, had not reached as high as her first floor flat. Her neighbour, John Batchelor, was not so lucky. His ground floor flat was flooded with three feet of water when the River Cherwell burst its banks shortly before 1am yesterday. He said: "I awoke to people shouting outside and hammering on my front door. I couldn't believe what was happening. Water was gushing through my entire flat."

"All I could do was lift my TV on to the bed. I only had time to pick up my most valuable possessions. Within half an hour the water was three feet deep. It is dark, grungy water which has ruined everything: my carpets, curtains and furniture. It's a nightmare."

Describing his rescue, he added: "The police and fire crews came and helped people out in their inflatable boats, but I saw little of the Blitz spirit. I was forced to spend the night at my factory in Overthorpe. No one offered me a bed for the night: it was miserable and cold." PC Noel

Thackeray of Thames Valley police, who was at the scene all night, said: "We had to ferry 16 people across the flooded expanse in our two inflatables. One old lady, who was disabled and couldn't walk, was lying on her bed and screaming for help."

Dozens of people who had to be rescued from canal boats when the Oxford Canal burst its banks at Banbury were counting the cost of their ruined holidays. Ruth Winter and Matthew Neiland had spent five days cruising through the Oxfordshire countryside when they moored up for the night to wait for the heavy rain to pass.

After watching in horror as the canal rose several feet then burst its banks, they tried to summon help. Recounting their ordeal from a rescue centre in Banbury, where they had been taken for shelter, Ms Winter, a teacher from Leicester, said: "We had an emergency number which the boat company had given us before we set off, but every time we called it, the phone was switched off."

"Eventually we called the police. We knew things were bad because the police helicopter had been flying over the canal for a couple of hours. There were some boats ahead of us which were in worse trouble. They had drifted away from the canal and were looking like they were going to get caught up in the Cherwell which was rushing along at a heck of a speed."

Eventually, they were rescued by the fire brigade in inflatable boats. Ms Winter added: "It was quite frightening, and we're glad to be back on dry land. Our boat was called *Reflection*, but it should be renamed the Ark because that's what it felt like at the time."

At Banbury railway station, all trains were cancelled after the tracks were submerged in four feet of floodwater. Fleets of buses were used to help passengers on their journeys and services from London to



The flooded streets of Leamington yesterday. One resident said: "It does seem it might have been predicted. I am deeply suspicious and very angry"

The streets that all became waterways

By HELEN CASTELL, PAUL RAMSBOTTOM AND STEPHEN FARRELL

Birmingham were cancelled or redirected.

Simon Clarkson, who was on his way to visit his girlfriend in Birmingham for the weekend, said: "At least they've got a good excuse this time. I wouldn't be surprised if there are fish swimming along the tracks."

Around 130 people spent part of the night at Banbury Police station and nearby St Mary's school. At 8.30am yesterday, another shelter was opened at Drayton school when the numbers of "refugees" continued to pour in. Dozens of volunteers from the Red Cross and the WRVS helped social services cope with the influx and local businesses donated food.

TREES and cars became beacons of colour in a sea of murky brown as streets flooded near the River Leam in Leamington, Warwickshire. By Welch's Meadow, householders were woken by car alarms in the early morning found cellars flooded waist high and contents of their freezers floating in ponds where their laundry rooms had been.

Leam Terrace, closest to the river, was the hardest hit. Some ground floors were under a foot of water. Willes Terrace and Beaconsfield Street had their cellars flooded, cars stranded, and back gardens under water. Some were evacuated to rela-

tives houses until the waters subsided, others hired pumps to tackle levels which rose by 2ins an hour.

Using brooms to clear a foot of water off ruined carpets, Elizabeth Hayward, 76, of Leam Terrace, complained: "It was like trying to empty the Severn with a teaspoon."

Margaret Phytian-Adams, 60, of Willes Terrace, had 6ft of water in her cellar, and her daughter spent the morning up to her waist fishing the contents of an overturned freezer and cupboard with a child's fishing net.

David Jenkins, 53, of Leam Terrace, said that his carpets came up when the ground floor of his three-storey Vic-

torian house was flooded 2ft deep. "All the furniture was floating around. When we tried to go downstairs, it was just like a big paddling pool. We're just left with a soggy mess."

Dr Kevin Mullally, an osteopath who runs his practice from his Leam Terrace home, lost cases of paper towels and covers stored in his cellar. Unable to drive through the congested traffic, he cycled to buy waders before treating the two patients who did not cancel.

Brian Baker, 50, and his family were evacuated from their house in Beaconsfield Street after his cellar was flooded to a depth of 6ft and

water lapped into the kitchen. He said: "I woke up to go to work and the water was up to the bottom of the car door. I just couldn't open it. We can't even get into the cellar, it's up to the back door. Most people in the road have been pumping it out, one guy has had the pump going since 8am."

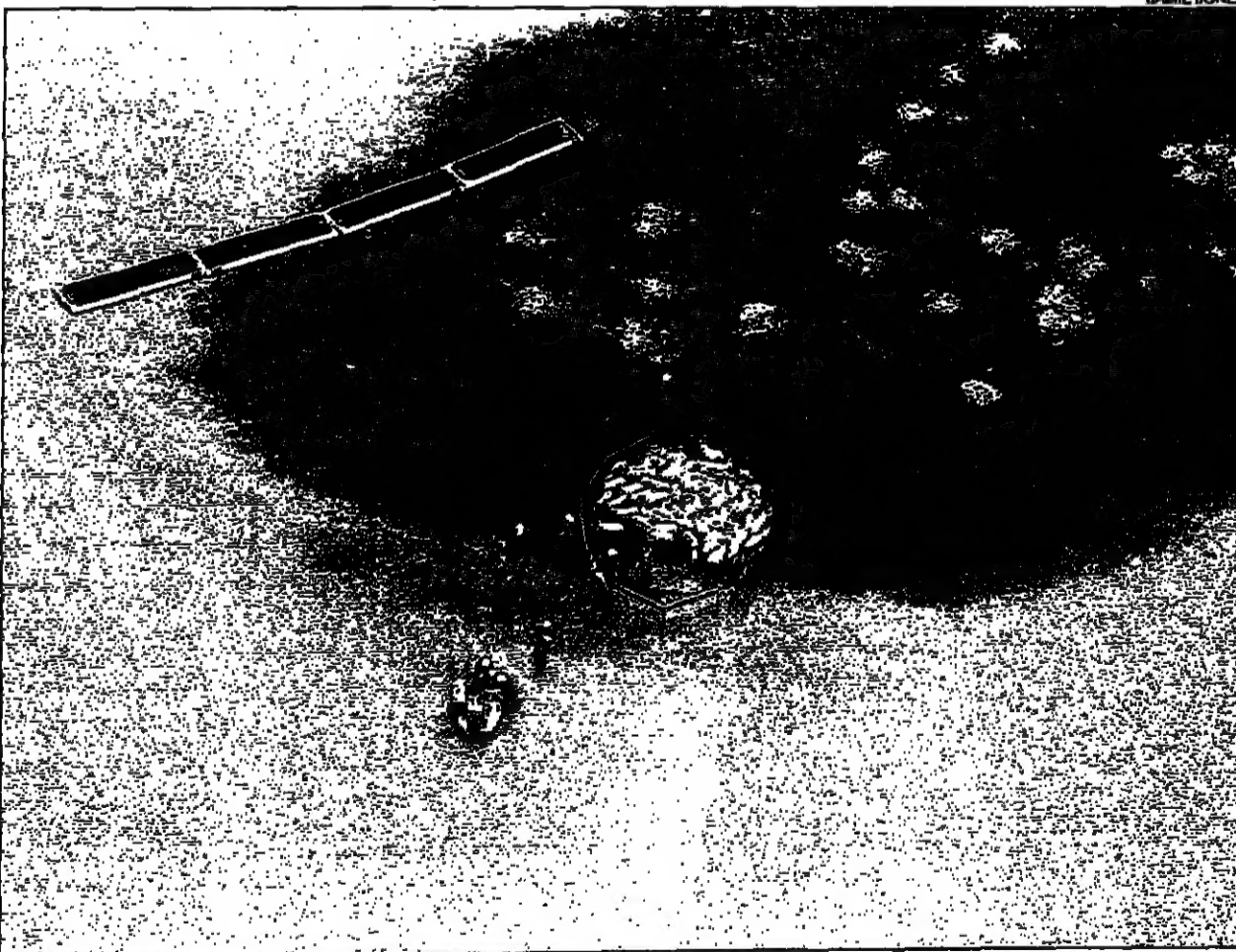
Rosalind Vinegrad lost family papers and photographs in the waist-high water filling her cellar. She said: "It does seem to me that it might have been predicted. The way the water suddenly declined struck me that was probably something to do with the sluices not being opened. I am deeply suspicious and very angry."

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Firemen rescue sheep stranded near Evesham, Worcester. Canals burst banks and rail lines were submerged

Rik Mayall hurt in bike accident

By A CORRESPONDENT

RIK MAYALL was seriously ill in hospital last night after crashing a quad bike at his country retreat.

The 39-year-old actor and comedian airlifted by police helicopter from Pasture Farm, East Allington, near Kingsbridge, south Devon, to Derriford Hospital, Plymouth. A spokeswoman there confirmed he was suffering head injuries and that his condition was "stable".

The area has suffered from the torrential rain that has affected much of the rest of the country.

It is understood the quad bike toppled on to him as he rode across a steeply sloping field on Thursday evening. Mr Mayall bought the estate last year as a family retreat. It is not clear whether his wife of 12 years, Barbara, and three

young children — Rosie, 11, Sidney, 9, and Bonnie, 2 — were with him at the time.

Villagers said he had been seen in the area on the day of the accident and it was assumed the family was spending Easter there. Susan Ferguson, landlady of the local pub, The Fortescue Arms, said: "We have heard about the accident but we know no details. Rik Mayall has popped in here a couple of times but he isn't really well known in the village."

"He is obviously pretty busy and since he bought the farm he hasn't spent much time here."

After starting out at London's Comic Strip, Mr Mayall appeared regularly on TV in *Saturday Live*, *The Comic Strip Presents...* and *The New Statesman*.

Drivers told to avoid blackspots

MOTORISTS have been warned to avoid blackspots over the weekend, especially around Northamptonshire and Warwickshire.

The RAC had advised motorists that travel should not be made unless completely necessary. Although most motorways, trunk and A roads are suffering from the bank holiday weekend congestion, the RAC hopes that they will not be affected by any flooding.

However, many minor roads, especially in Hereford, Gloucestershire, and Cambridgeshire, have been closed and continuing rain in Norfolk threatens to burst the banks of eleven rivers in the county, which would lead to widespread disruption on the county's roads.

Meanwhile, delays and

cancellations on the railways are expected to worsen if the bad weather continues, with trains travelling through the Midlands suffering the worst delays and even cancellations. Silver Link, Thames Link, Virgin, Central and Connex South Central have already been affected by serious delays and flooding.

A spokesman for National Rail Inquiries advised passengers not to travel from Euston to either Manchester or Liverpool unless weather conditions improved. The Birmingham New Street to London line is also severely disrupted in Wolverhampton, and the line from London to Stratford upon Avon is being forced to terminate at Banbury because of flooding.

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THE EASTER PEACE

Determination, snacks and adrenalin kept show on road

Hands-on negotiating skills and the involvement of two Prime Ministers were crucial in reaching a settlement after 33 hours, writes Philip Webster

IT WAS a rollercoaster four days in the quest for lasting peace in Northern Ireland. A negotiating session involving Ulster's political leaders with Tony Blair, Bertie Aherne and George Mitchell that began at 8am on Thursday and finally reached its destination after 33 hours.

As the participants emerged bleary-eyed to face the cameras, emotions ranged from delight, apprehension and most of all — relief that it had ended at last.

It had been expected that the deal, which had been largely agreed during the night, would be unveiled in the morning. But Mr Mitchell's final draft slowed progress as the participants took a breath and fully came to terms with the agreement they were about to approve.

Mr Aherne went to the talks at their Stormont opening on Tuesday, returned to Dublin for his mother's funeral and then raced back to the north for a meeting with David Trimble and Mr Blair that many have called the most crucial of the summit.

There were no three-course meals, no alcohol. As he negotiated relentlessly in Stormont's castle buildings, Mr Blair was fuelled by snacks and adrenalin, surviving on the road to peace on tea, bacon sandwiches, cakes, Mars and Twix bars and lots of bananas.

Mr Blair sometimes infuriates those close to him by concentrating on only one big issue at a time. This one was huge and he focused on it completely. He went outside only once — for a brief stroll with Alastair Campbell, his press secretary, at 6.30pm on Thursday.

He slept not a wink, after managing just four hours the previous night at Hillsborough Castle. Last night he was in Madrid at the start of a brief holiday with his wife and children, tired but elated at having pulled off the greatest achievement of his premiership.

Throughout the Stormont sessions the shirt-sleeved Prime Minister held countless meetings with all the key players. Party leaders took their problems to him, and Mr Aherne with George Mitchell, the talks chairman, were kept involved in all developments. But most of the key issues

DIARY OF A SUMMIT

usually ended up on his oval teak table, surrounded by its 10 green chairs.

Mr Blair prides himself on being a good negotiator and drafted many of the contentious paragraphs in his own hand. Occasionally he lost his temper — exasperated when a participant against whom he needed to bounce an idea was elsewhere.

Mr Blair's family travelled to Spain ahead of him. Yesterday morning at around 7am he rang them to apologise for what would be a very late arrival. Almost certainly the biggest factor in his success



Bertie Aherne: funeral

Flight straight to talks from mother's funeral was critical in convincing Unionists a deal was possible

was his decision to go with Mr Aherne to the final stages of the talks. Their very presence, the fact that two Prime Ministers were giving up so much of their time, concentrated minds and added to the determination to do a deal.

There were some who thought that the Unionists would ultimately walk away from the talks. It was Mr Trimble who urged Mr Blair to be there. But having asked him to go, the Ulster Unionist leader could not let him down. "He could not let Mr Blair return home in failure — that would probably have spelled the end for David as party leader," a Unionist source said.

The six key milestones on the way to a deal were:

□ April 1: Mr Aherne make a

sudden outburst that he had "serious disagreements" with London.

□ April 7: Mr Trimble denounced the Mitchell draft plan and the Irish government for leaning unfairly towards Sinn Féin. The two declarations probably cancelled each other out.

□ Wednesday 7pm: Mr Aherne flew in by helicopter from his mother's funeral in Dublin and went straight into a meeting with Mr Blair and Mr Trimble. Mr Trimble deeply appreciated Mr Aherne having arrived so quickly from a sad family event. According to a source, they looked each other in the eye and said that they were there because they wanted to get a deal. A massive psychological hurdle was removed.

□ Thursday 7pm: A breakthrough on the vexed question of North-South bodies surfaced, rooting their authority in the new assembly.

□ Friday 2am: Mitchell McLaughlin, Sinn Féin chairman, claimed that the talks were on the verge of collapse because too much had been conceded to the Unionists. There were rumours of a walkout.

□ Friday 7.15am: The mood swung violently yet again. Mr McLaughlin walked through the snow to wake snoring journalists to claim progress on the North-South issue, the assembly and paramilitary prisoners.

Suddenly the prospect of a deal that kept the Unionists and Sinn Féin on board — once unthinkable — was miraculously possible.

Mr Blair allowed himself no such thoughts. At previous briefings Mr Campbell had sounded more upbeat than the facts warranted. It was a ploy to retain momentum and keep everyone engaged.

Now at 8.15am, with a deal close, Mr Campbell was taking nothing for granted. Across the road Mr Blair was having a shower and shave. Was he not doing handstands to celebrate, Mr Campbell was asked. "If he is doing handstands he is doing them in the shower," he replied.

Next Friday Mr Blair he will be in the Middle East doing his bit to boost the flagging peace effort. It will be a reminder that a peace accord is usually easier to negotiate than to put into effect.



David Trimble with Jeffrey Donaldson, left, the MP who kept the deal on a knife-edge with his reservations

The man who said no

BY MARTIN FLETCHER
CHIEF IRELAND
CORRESPONDENT

UNIONIST DIVISIONS

ONE man kept two Prime Ministers, the American President and the world's media on a knife-edge yesterday.

Just as the peace agreement for Northern Ireland appeared to have been clinched, Jeffrey Donaldson, the 35-year-old Ulster Unionist MP for Lagan Valley, cried foul.

Mr Donaldson told David Trimble, his party leader, that he could not accept the proposed agreement because he could not sit on an executive committee with Sinn Féin members without guaranteed IRA decommissioning.

He said verbal guarantees offered by Tony Blair and Bertie Aherne late the previous night were insufficient. Without Mr

Donaldson, Mr Trimble stood little chance of selling the agreement to his party. He is Mr Trimble's heir apparent and a Deputy Grand Master of the Orange Order. Four of the party's nine MPs were already in almost open rebellion.

It took President Clinton's personal intervention and written assurances from Mr Blair to retrieve the situation. Late in the afternoon Mr Donaldson sped away from Stormont. Unionist officials acknowledged he had continuing reservations, but insisted he was "on board".

Mr Trimble's fight to sell the agreement to his party starts this morning when he meets the UUP's 100-strong

executive — and it is essentially a battle for the soul of Unionism. On the one hand, the agreement offers nationalists power-sharing, involves Unionists sitting at a "cabinet" table with Sinn Féin and gives Dublin a limited say in the North's affairs. On the other hand, Mr Trimble has secured Dublin's formal recognition of Northern Ireland's legitimacy and the principle of consent. It has agreed to end its constitutional claim to the North.

He has achieved a new assembly for the Province after 25 years of direct rule, and is almost certain to be its First Minister. And while the North-South bodies are hardly the toothless affairs Mr Trimble envisaged, he has

beaten off nationalist demands for strong, independent institutions with executive powers.

Above all, the deal offers Northern Ireland a Unionist majority and a chance of stability it has not known in 30 years by meeting the more legitimate aspirations of the Roman Catholic minority. By including Sinn Féin, it promises an end to IRA terrorism.

The ghost of Brian Faulkner has hovered over all Unionist leaders for the past quarter-century. He was the last who dared deal with the enemy, and was quickly destroyed by headline Unionists of the "not-an-inch" variety. Mr Trimble now stands a reasonable chance of laying that ghost, but it will be a momentous clash between the old guard and the new.

"I am pleased to announce that the two governments and the political parties in Northern Ireland have reached agreement."

Senator George Mitchell

"I am very happy for the people in Northern Ireland who I believe will now have the opportunity to build a peaceful future for themselves."

Mo Mowlam

"She he has been absolutely brilliant. She has this knack of keeping up when they are treading down."

Tony Blair's spokesman

on Mo Mowlam

"Isn't it far better we are spilling sweat than spilling blood?"

David Adams of the DUP

"I think it is absolutely historic. The people of Northern Ireland have to make up their own minds when they read and examine it."

David Ervine, Progressive

Unionist Party

"It means those who seek to kill and maim will be stopped."

David Andrews, Irish

Labour Minister

"He has been of immense help to me. He has made a massive leap of the imagination and a huge political gamble."

An associate of David

Trimble

"A pint of Guinness, or a large whiskey, or something like that."

Samuel Adams, 18th

century leader, when asked how he proposed to deal

with his enemies

"I think this will be the end of the road for the IRA. Their future (as paramilitaries) will be a hell of a lot brighter than my life was."

Costy Spence, former

UUP member

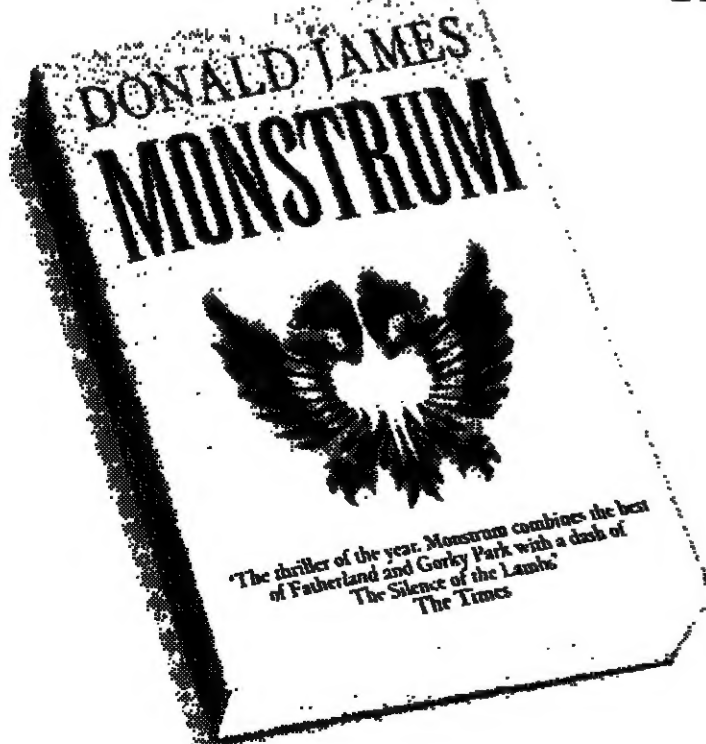
"The settlement shows that the will of the people for peace and co-operation is stronger than the divide."

Jacques Santer

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Deal that made Adams smile

BY MARTIN FLETCHER

SINN FEIN

GERRY ADAMS has got his deal. The big question now is whether he can sell it to the hard men of the IRA. The Sinn Féin president has not achieved the united Ireland for which so many of his republican comrades have died over the past 30 years and the deal involves Dublin abandoning its constitutional claim to the North.

He is bound to be denounced by the purists of the Continuity IRA and of the new group that has formed around the IRA's former quartermaster-general. Both persist in believing violence is the best route to Irish unity. More disgruntled hardliners will almost certainly defect to those two groups, but Mr Adams has probably won enough to keep the bulk of his movement on board.

He is the shrewdest of operators, and one senior government official confided yesterday that he and his fellow negotiators could not wipe the smiles off their faces — which was one of the reasons for the Unionists' last-minute jitters. That being the case, the other intriguing

question is whether Sinn Féin and the IRA now join the ranks of those battling republican forces.

To sit on the new executive committee, Sinn Féin will have to renew its commitment to Mitchell-style principles of non-violence and will be participating in decisions on security matters.

The two splinter groups represent a significant threat. CIRA has exploded several large car bombs this year in an effort to wreck the talks. The quartermaster's group, linked to the 32-county sovereignty committee, has access to lethal IRA technology and was behind the massive car bomb intercepted on its way to Britain two weeks ago.

Mr Adams must win approval for the agreement from his party's annual conference in Dublin next Saturday, and will present it as a stepping stone towards the ultimate goal of Irish unity. He has won all-Ireland bodies considerably stronger than the merely consultative role envisaged by Unionists — but not with the

independence and explicit executive powers he had wanted. He has won a share of real power in the running of Northern Ireland.

In an unprecedented move, the IRA is believed to have given Sinn Féin the go-ahead to sit in the new assembly, where it is assured of substantial representation. More importantly, the party would probably gain two places on the 12-strong executive committee provided there is prior IRA decommissioning.

Further down the road, it is entirely conceivable that Mr Adams could become Mr Trimble's deputy first minister, and that Sinn Féin ministers will take charge of all-Ireland bodies.

Sinn Féin has been steadily gaining on the ailing SDLP, and is on course to become Northern Ireland's largest nationalist party. Assuming that the IRA ceasefire continues, all its members now in prison should be released within two or three years.

Sinn Féin did not achieve disbandment of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, but there is to be an independent review of the force.

MILESTONES ALONG THE TROUBLED PATH TO PEACE

1916, Easter Sunday: Easter Rising in Dublin launches Irish rebellion.

1919: war of independence from Britain starts.

1920: Government of Ireland Act partitions Ireland.

1921: Anglo-Irish treaty provides for creation of Irish Free State and splits Sinn Féin.

1921: George V opens Northern Ireland Parliament.

1922: violence in Northern Ireland — 232 killed.

1922: civil war in Free State between pro and anti-treaty groups.

IRA is declared illegal in Northern Ireland.

1936: IRA declared illegal organisation in South.

1937: Eamon De Valera's constitution claims sovereignty over all the island.

1939: Eire remains neutral in Second World War.

1949: Eire leaves the Commonwealth and becomes a republic.

1956-1962: IRA wages its border campaign.

1965: Sean Lemass, Irish Prime Minister, makes first visit to Northern Ireland counterpart.



Fighters during the Easter Rising

1966: Nelson's Column in Dublin destroyed in bomb blast.

1968: first civil rights march held in Northern Ireland.

1968: present troubles begin as rioting erupts in Londonderry after police wage into civil rights demonstration.

1969: Harold Wilson sends British Army on to streets in Northern Ireland.

1971: first British soldier killed in present troubles.

1971: Internment without trial introduced in Northern Ireland.

1972: Stormont Parliament abolished.

1973: Sunningdale agreement sets up a power-sharing executive.

1974: Ulster workers' strike brings down power-sharing executive.

1981: ten men die in IRA hunger strike.

1985: Anglo-Irish agreement gives Irish Republic involvement in Northern Ireland affairs for the first time.

1994: IRA declares a ceasefire, followed by loyalist ceasefires.

1994: first official meeting between Government and Sinn Féin.

1996: IRA ceasefire ends with Docklands bomb that kills two.

1997: Tony Blair visits Belfast and Government starts talks with Sinn Féin.

1997: IRA calls new ceasefire.

1998, Good Friday: peace process ends in agreement involving the British and Irish Governments and all the main parties in Northern Ireland except the Democratic Unionist Party.

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THE EASTER PEACE

'Wait and see' is the mantra on the streets



MAGNUS LINKLATER

The people of Belfast feel a measure of hope mixed with a large dose of caution

THE wind whistling down the Falls Road cut to the very marrow. Collars up, heads down, hands in pockets, early morning shoppers were intent on one thing only: getting out of the cold. And that, in a sense, was how Belfast reacted yesterday as news of the peace deal filtered through to them: collars up, heads down, hoping things would turn out fine, but none too confident that life was finally taking a real turn for the better.

"We'll believe it when we see it" ... "I still don't know what it means" ... "We've had our hopes raised so often" ... "Can you trust those people?" The comments kept on cropping up as the news bucked and shifted in the course of a long Good Friday. Compared to the euphoria that greeted the IRA ceasefire in August 1994, or the messianic visit of Bill Clinton in November 1995, the reaction was cautious, almost fearful. It was summed up for me by Violet Clarke, whose fruit shop in the Shankill Road became briefly famous when Mr Clinton bought a bag of oranges there and told Violet that peace was on the way.

"I watched the talks up to the mid-night deadline, and no matter what politician was on, they weren't giving anything away," she said. "The ordinary people coming into the shop this morning haven't been talking much about it. In fact there's been no talk whatsoever. We've had these peace talks for a long time and we know that whatever the politicians say, the IRA could just call off the ceasefire any time."

She wondered whether the deal could, in the long run, be delivered by Ulster's political leaders. Her final verdict — "Let's wait and see" — became something of a mantra.

It echoed almost exactly the thoughts of Father Kevin Browne, Rector of Clonard Monastery, as preparations began for the afternoon's service of the Stations of the Cross. Clonard has a grim history: it has seen violent riots destroy nearby buildings, according to republican mythology, IRA gunmen occupied the building and held it against the Army and the RUC.

That may explain in part the caution of Father Browne. "At the moment," he said, "people are waiting to see whether they feel happy enough about the detail to support the agreement."

His sermon on Easter Sunday will reflect that hesitation. "I will be talking about forgiveness, and commitment to Jesus. I have no doubt that how we treat other people is connected with that. We will be saying our prayers for future agreement and for peace."

A few hundred yards from the monastery, the old peace wall by the Springfield Road still stands, a monument to a legacy of violence. Scattered by sectarian slogans, yesterday it was part of a playground for children. Almost inevitably their games were those of war not peace. "This is not the peace wall, it's the fighting wall," one said.

Despite the old ways, there was, running through almost every conversation, another theme that may in the end reflect a more practical and encouraging prospect for the future. Most people regarded it as almost inconceivable that the talks could not deliver something better. "There's no way back from this," said Peter McQuade, branch manager of a finance company. "The eyes of the world are on them, their reputations are on the line, and they know there will be a lot more trouble for them in failing than in pressing ahead."

It was a view repeated by Ciaran Quinn, who works at the Falls Community Council. He quoted Billy Hutchinson, spokesman for the Progressive Unionist Party, who had said at one stage: "This is compromise or war." Mr Quinn, who believes that a deal can be made to stick, argued that what will count is not so much the finer points of detail, but whether the Roman Catholic population of Northern Ireland can be convinced that it will offer them "basic equality".

"It is still the case," Mr Quinn said, "that Catholics are two and a half times as likely to be unemployed. They still believe they are denied equality of treatment." He pointed to poorer housing, overcrowding, and the anger caused by millions of pounds spent on building the RUC's new barracks instead of improving living conditions for the Catholic community. Nevertheless, both he and his colleague, Gerry McConville, conceded that, while old resentments will never entirely disappear, the atmosphere in which the talks have been conducted has changed completely since 1974, when the last power-sharing assembly collapsed in violence and rancour.

"The debate will go on, but it hasn't fractured the community as much as it used to in the past," Mr McConville said. "This is a very politicised community, and it is judging its leaders on performance now rather than the emotions of the past."

Nothing illustrated this better than the extraordinary midnight press conference on Thursday night of the Rev Ian Paisley, leader of the Democratic Unionist Party. He and a crowd of demonstrators had "broken through" the gates of Stormont Castle. But, where as once Mr Paisley could have commanded the support of thousands, this time there were fewer than 200 behind him. He no longer frightened anyone, and he knew it.

Even in Portadown, a centre of die-hard unionism, the response to Mr Paisley's last stand was largely indifference. "Everyone just said, 'Isn't it sad?'" said Mark Neill, a councillor for the area. "I think they just felt he's contributed so little."

Mr Neill made no pretence that the deal was widely welcomed in hardline Unionist quarters, but nor did he say that it was rejected.

"Half of those who called in to David Trimble's office said, 'Hold on, it's a step too far,' and half said, 'Hold on, it's great.' But there's tremendous support for David, and since he has signed up to the deal, then I know it will be endorsed by the 800 or 900 Ulster Unionist delegates. That in turn means that the grass-roots will support it too."

In Portadown, Mr Neill conceded that there was still fear, some confusion, and

many doubts about what was going on. There was fear, he said, of seeing Sinn Féin in government, fear of IRA prisoners being released, and anger that victims of IRA violence will be forgotten. "But there are compensations. The Anglo-Irish Agreement has gone, and with it a large part of Unionist resentment."



Children playing by the old peace wall yesterday, but their games were those of war. "This is not the peace wall, it's the fighting wall," one said

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Braveheart 2: the heroic failure that sank Scotland

THE extraordinary life of a 17th-century Scottish adventurer and explorer who founded a disastrous settlement in Panama may be turned into a Hollywood blockbuster to rival the award-winning *Braveheart*.

A Labour MP who is a descendant of William Paterson, who will be honoured in Scotland in July on the 300th anniversary of the ill-fated mission, is leading talks with the film companies.

Paterson founded the Darien settlement 300 years ago on a mosquito-infested scrap of land on the northern coast of Panama after an epic four-month voyage. The pioneers had wrongly believed, on the basis of sightings by sailors and pirates, that Darien offered them a colony where entrepreneurs could establish trading links with the world and bring prestige and prosperity to their country.

It was the biggest economic disaster to befall Scotland. It caused the death of almost 2,000 settlers, who fell victim to "virulent mosquito fever" and cost £500,000 in investment which almost bankrupted the Scottish economy.

But Paterson, whose exploits are taught in Scottish schools, remains a popular folk hero, despite the fact that historians argue that the venture crippled the country's economy to such an extent that it triggered the dissolution of the Scottish Parliament and led to the 1707 Act of Union with England.

Now Fraser Kemp, MP for Washington and Houghton, who voted in favour of bringing back a Scottish parliament, is planning to tell the world how it was lost in the first place. "It's a fascinating story of individual heroism and collective endeavour at a major historical turning-point. It has pathos and passion," he said.

David Armitage, of Columbia University's history department in New York, said: "The Darien venture was the most ambitious colonial scheme attempted in the 17th century. It should be looked at in terms of the extraordinary imagination which went into it. The Scots were the first to realise the strategic importance of the area around Panama, which gave access to the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans."

Even today, three centuries after Paterson, the densely forested terrain remains inhospitable and undeveloped. Explorers have flocked to cross the Darien Gap, as it is now known, which is the only land route connecting the Americas.

The land is littered with the evidence of their endeavours: carcasses of Land Rovers and people who failed to complete

Film firms are in talks over 17th-century epic, write Gillian Harris and Andrew Pierce

the expedition scar the land. It has even been immortalised in verse by John Keats who, in his *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*, used it to symbolise the awe of discovery

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies When a new planet swims into his ken Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes He stared at the Pacific — and all his men Look'd at each other with a wild surmise — Silent, upon a peak in Darien

Paterson helped to set up the Company of Scotland in Edinburgh to promote foreign trade and enthusiasm about Darien as a remote spot where Scots could settle. Thousands

of people invested money in the expedition, which was scheduled to depart from the Port of Leith in July 1698. Thousands more volunteered to travel on board the five ships, including Highlanders driven from their homes by famine and soldiers discharged after the Glencoe Massacre. In his book, *The Darien Disaster*, the historian John Frebble wrote: "To the people then it was hope, it represented their fevered

longing for freedom and prosperity and it symbolised their defiance of England."

But Mr Frebble said last night: "They were plain daft to try. The journey was too long. The land was infested with mosquitos and ravaged by fever. It was disaster. They never had a chance. It, without doubt, was the one event which led to the signing of the Act of Union."

In the end 1,200 people set sail watched by cheering crowds on the quayside, but it was a depleted group that arrived in Darien in November. Many were sick and others were quarrelling as power struggles arose among the elected councillors. They struggled ashore and re-named the land Caledonia, with its capital New Edinburgh.

The first task was to dig graves for the dead volunteers, which included Paterson's wife. The situation grew worse because of a lack of food. The

native Indians took pity on the Scots, bringing them gifts of fruit and fish.

Seven months after arriving, 400 Scots were dead. The rest were emaciated and yellow with fever. They decided to go home.

But in Scotland the glory of Caledonia was untainted by reality. A second expedition, with 1,300 people on board, arrived at Darien in November 1699. Fire destroyed the ship that was carrying their entire supply of food.

They hung on until March 1700. The Articles of Capitulation to the Spanish were signed in the rain with a Scottish drummer beating a retreat. Only a handful survived the return journey.

Mr Frebble added: "Spanish and English mariners knew Darien and would not touch it. They feared the fever. But Paterson was reckless and thought he knew better. Scotland paid a terrible price because of him."



Historian and author John Frebble with a 1660s map of Panama: Scotland paid a terrible price for the ill-fated expedition, he says



It was disaster. They never had a chance. It was the one event which led to the Act of Union

Bognor Birdman competition, August, Bognor Pier.



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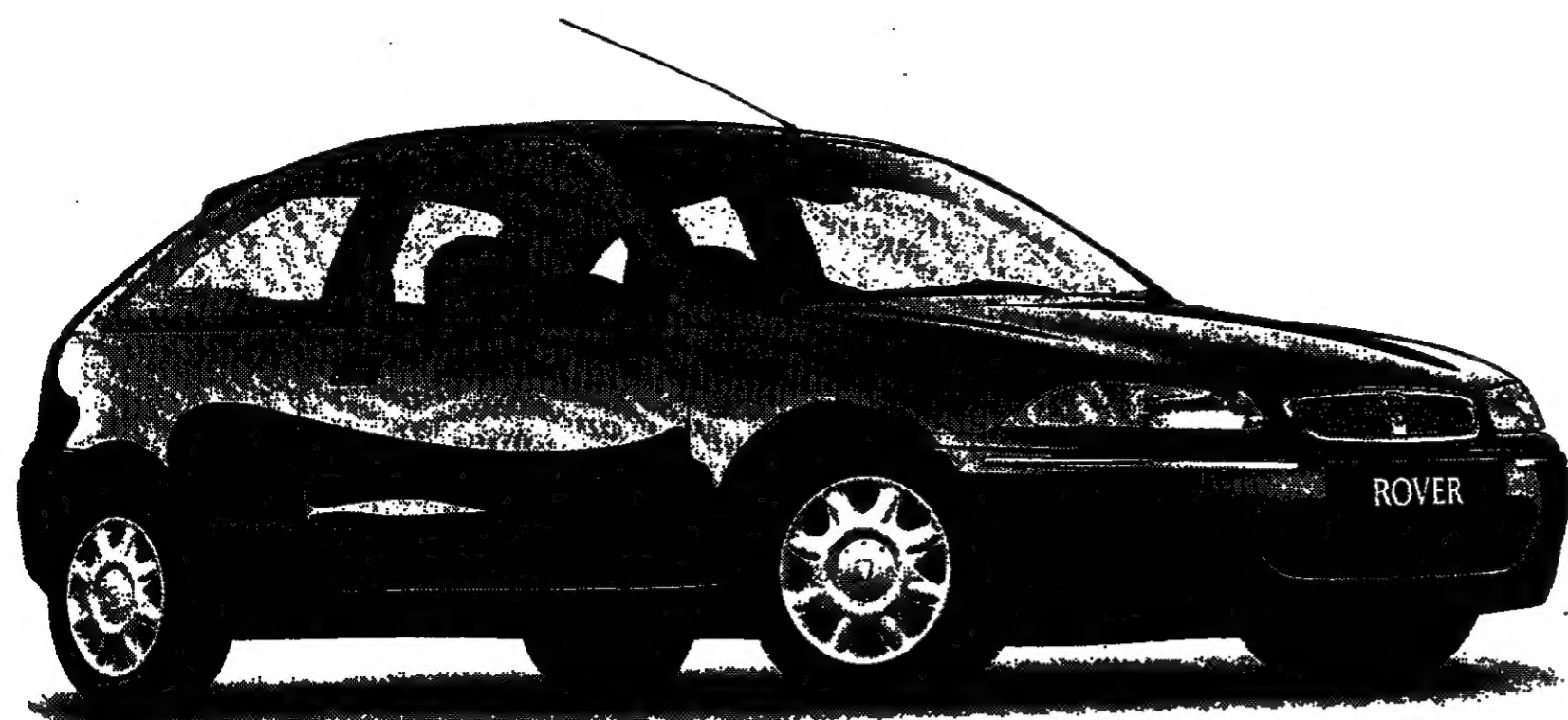
FOUR IN THE FRAME FOR THE LEAD



FRASER KEMP has received an invitation from Planet 24. Bob Odenkirk's television company is looking to the William Morris Agency in Hollywood to communicate the power and significance of the story to the big film studios. The story of William Paterson's folly is the natural successor to the box-office success *Braveheart*, which starred Mel Gibson as William Wallace, who raised the banner of Scottish independence by seeking to drive out the English. Paterson's adventure is said to have cost Scotland that independence. Sean Connery is the favourite to play Paterson. The names of Harrison Ford, who starred in *The Mosquito Coast*, and Robert De Niro, who was in *The Mission*, another failed jungle enterprise, have also been touted.



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Cardinal Hume urges return of bedtime prayers

BY RUTH GLEDHILL
RELIGION CORRESPONDENT

MOTHERS should kneel and pray with their children when they put them to bed, according to Cardinal Basil Hume, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster.

Evoking the image of Christopher Robin saying his prayers, Cardinal Hume said society was in danger of losing its spiritual direction because it had turned its back on family prayer.

"Prayer has dropped out of family life. Those of us who pray learn our prayers as children from Mum. As our society has become more and more secular, the habit of prayer has fallen off."

He said the image of Christopher Robin kneeling by the bed, and the famous line, "Hush! Hush! Whisper who dares!" from A.A. Milne's poem *Vespers*, was one that once found a place in households throughout the land. But today, while there was a



"God bless Mummy. I know that's right..."

spiritual yearning illustrated in the response to the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, society had become so secularised that increasing numbers did not even know how to begin when it came to praying.

Cardinal Hume was speaking as he launched his *Basil in*

Blunderland video - modelled on *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* - in which he plays himself in a game of spiritual hide-and-seek with two children.

"This has been a long process which began with the Enlightenment, a long process of religion slipping out of our collective consciousness," he said. "The standard prayer is the prayer our Lord taught us, the *Our Father*." But, he added, "People need to learn to distinguish between saying prayers and praying." It was possible to feel them off without really using them properly. "The best definition of prayer is the raising of the heart and mind up to God."

"If people pray, their consciousness become more sensitive. It is very difficult to be a praying person and then to go and be beastly to your neighbour."

Without a return to prayer, the millennium celebrations would be meaningless. "There will be lots of street parties,



Cardinal Hume, who said: "It is very difficult to be a praying person then go and be beastly to your neighbour"

lots of celebration of the Dome. But if we are going to celebrate the year 2000 properly, we have got to go into the 21st century different people, changed people.

"The celebration of the year 2000, if it does not mean that minds and hearts are touched in some way by the Holy

Spirit, if we are not open, then it is going to be an empty celebration."

Cardinal Hume added: "There is in society a search for values. This is an opportunity that must not be missed."

He said it was significant that Westminster Cathedral had been more than three

quarters full for weekly spiritual milks delivered during Lent. He was also struck by how many people in Hyde Park joined in the Lord's Prayer during the funeral of the Princess.

He said: "There are a lot of people who want to know about prayer. The book of

Basil in Blunderland has sold well. But a book does not reach that very considerable number of people who do not read but are quite happy to look at videos. We have to use these means now to preach."

The 53-minute video costs £12.99 from high street stockists.

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McAvoy asks for patience over reforms

BY JOHN O'LEARY, EDUCATION EDITOR

THE leader of Britain's largest teaching union appealed to his members yesterday to be patient with the Government, as a series of calls for industrial action threatened ministers' plans to raise standards in schools.

As the National Union of Teachers' conference opened in Blackpool, Doug McAvoy, the general secretary, accused left-wing delegates of "political posturing" in their demands for strikes and other forms of industrial action, which are even more numerous than under the Conservative administration.

Motions submitted for the weekend conference call for action on pay, conditions of service, the sacking of incompetent teachers, class sizes, redundancies and the introduction of education action zones. Most are opposed by the union's moderate-controlled executive.

The first 11 months of Labour rule had produced a mixture of good and bad in education, Mr McAvoy said. "If delegates analyse the record honestly, they will be more encouraged about the prospects for the future at this conference than any of them

will have been during the past 20 years," he said.

The battle between left-wing groups and the more moderate coalition within the NUT remains on a knife edge. Moderates won all the main offices in the latest elections, but the Left has made gains on the executive.

Extra funding for schools, increased nursery provision, the reduced curriculum for primary education and the Government's literacy and numeracy projects were all welcomed by the NUT, Mr McAvoy said. But doubts remained about education action zones, and the Government's policy of "naming and shaming" failing schools had been counterproductive. Such areas should be the subject of negotiation, he said.

However, the conference will hear a call to reject the Government's approach to raising school standards, to demand the sacking of Chris Woodhead as Chief Inspector of Schools and the disbandment of Ofsted and to work to rule in support of better conditions of service. The union is already committed to a boycott of tasks considered unnecessarily bureaucratic.

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Goodwood puts accent on chic

By Marcus Binney

RESTORED Regency interiors rivaling those at Windsor Castle go on show this weekend at Goodwood House in Sussex. The work began when the 10th Duke of Richmond handed over the running of the 12,000-acre estate to his son, the Earl of March and Kinrara, who gave up a career as an advertising photographer to devote himself to it.

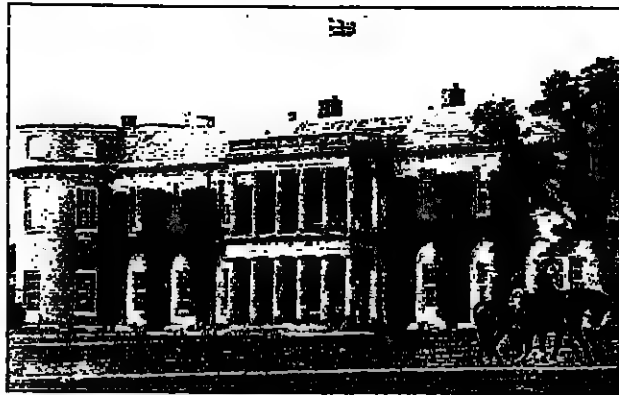
Lord March, an indefatigable worker, learnt earlier this week that the Sevres porcelain cabinets could not be ready in time for the preview. "It just can't be done," he was told. "It can," Lord March replied, and stayed up all night to finish the room himself.

From Regency times, the lifeblood of Goodwood has been not hunting, shooting and fishing, but racing and Parisian chic. It stems from the fact that the 1st Duke was the son of Charles II and his Breton mistress, Louise de Keroualle. "The dukes spoke perfect French, so, in matters of fashion, they were a step ahead of everyone," Rosemary Baird, the curator, said.

While Ambassador to France, the 3rd Duke bought part of a set of Gobelin tapestries made for Louis XV. His tapestry drawing room has been the scene of more Privy Council meetings than any other private house.

Nearly 200 Old Masters in the public rooms have been rehung under the guidance of Alec Cobbe, including masterpieces by Stubbs and Canaletto and magnificent family portraits by Reynolds, Romney, Ramsay, Lely, Lawrence and Kneller.

The great revelation has been the rediscovery of the original yellow scagliola marbling of the Egyptian dining room beneath ten coats of paint. Designed by the architect James Wyatt in 1802, this was one of the first Egyptian rooms in England, but had been painted over in 1906. Missing Egyptian details have



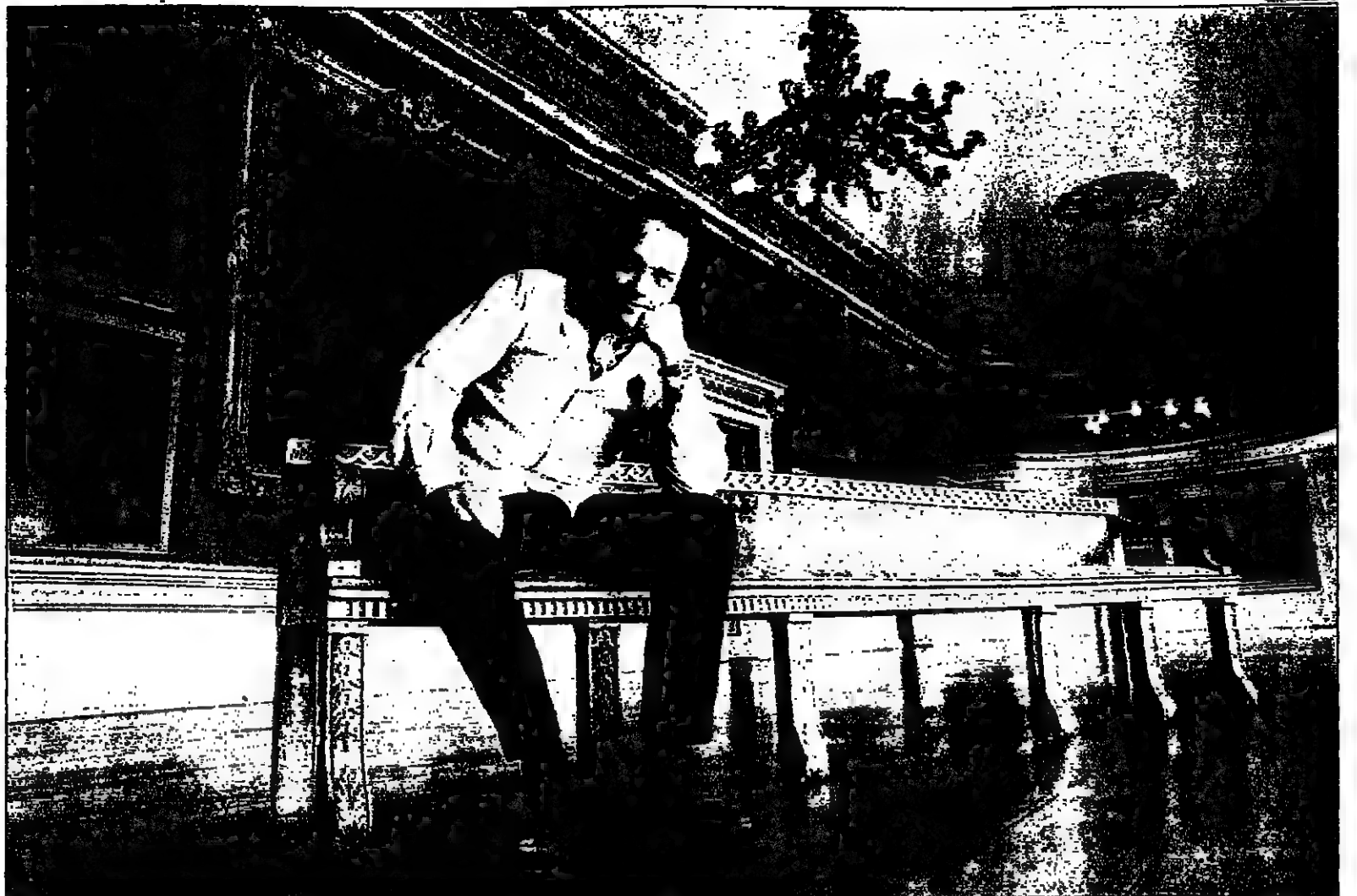
been taken from illustrations made by the artists who accompanied Napoleon on his Egyptian campaign in 1798 which the 3rd Duke had been the first to acquire and use. Now it is lit by flaming torches which are actually pieces of silk lit by coloured filters and kept fluttering by fans.

The ballroom at Goodwood is now rehung, Grand Tour style, with pictures in double rows after a sketch by the 3rd Duke. Pride of place is given to a magnificent Van Dyck of Charles I and his family, which Oliver Cromwell had sold and the Duke brought back from Paris during the French Revolution. Smuggled out in a barge, the ornate frame still bears the marks of rough handling.

The Supper Room is hung with Scottish scenes recalling that the 5th Duke inherited the Gordon lands (said to comprise one sixth of Scotland), prompting Queen Victoria to recreate the dukedom of Gordon for the 6th Duke.

Having launched the popular Goodwood Festival of Speed, Lord March plans this September to reopen Goodwood's motor-racing circuit, closed in 1966 for safety reasons. Newly improved, it will reopen 50 years to the day after his grandfather inaugurated it in 1948.

Goodwood House will be open tomorrow and Monday. Information on 01243 755000



Lord March in the ballroom which has been rehung in Grand Tour style. The dining room at Goodwood, left, is "lit" by lamps with simulated flames

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Jeremy Turner and his bride, Lisa, at Pendennis Castle

TWO castles ended centuries of friendly rivalry yesterday when their keepers married (Tim Jones writes). The bridegroom was Jeremy Turner, 47, head custodian at Pendennis Castle, on the western bank of the River Fal at Falmouth, Cornwall. Lisa Cooper, his bride, is deputy head custodian at St Mawes Castle across the river.

The couple, who met three years ago, had a civil ceremony

at Pendennis Castle, walking under an arch of swords held by a guard of honour dressed in Tudor and Stuart costumes. The castles, now owned by English Heritage, were built in 1543 to guard against the French. Pendennis was strengthened under Elizabeth I and withstood a five-month siege in the Civil War, becoming the penultimate royalist garrison to surrender on the mainland.

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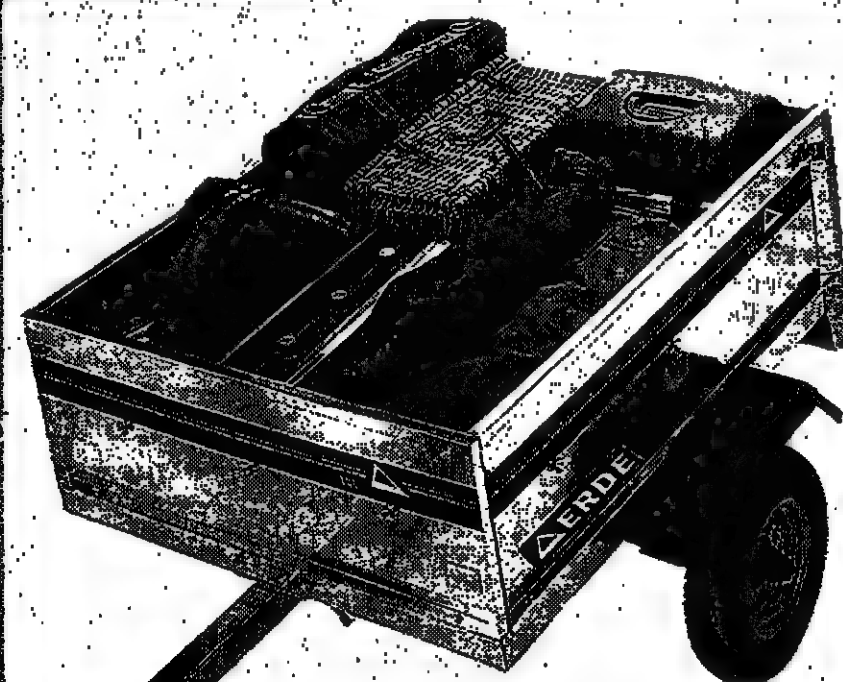
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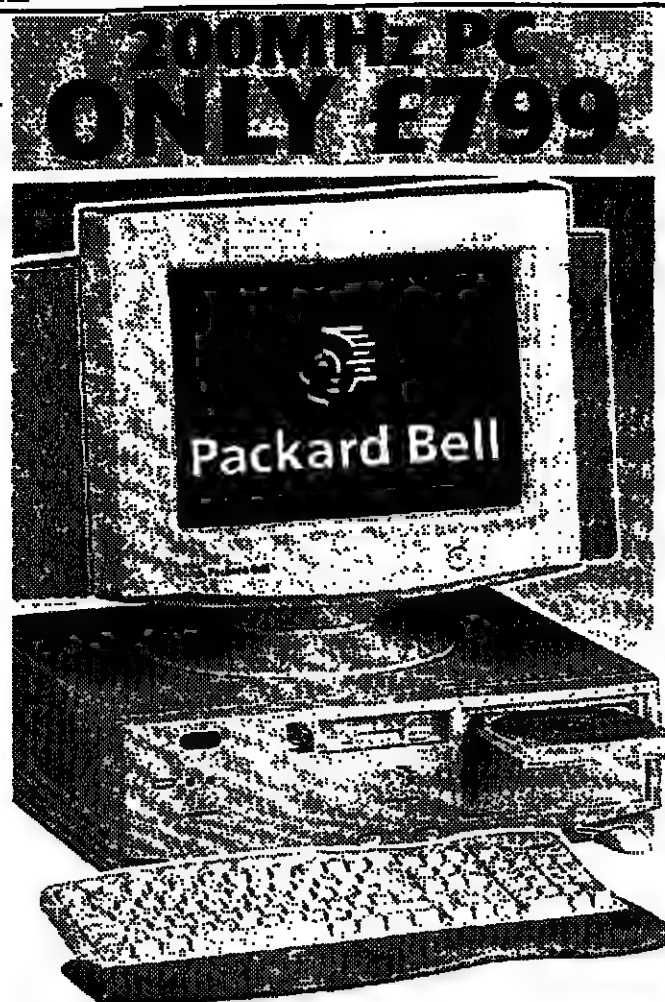


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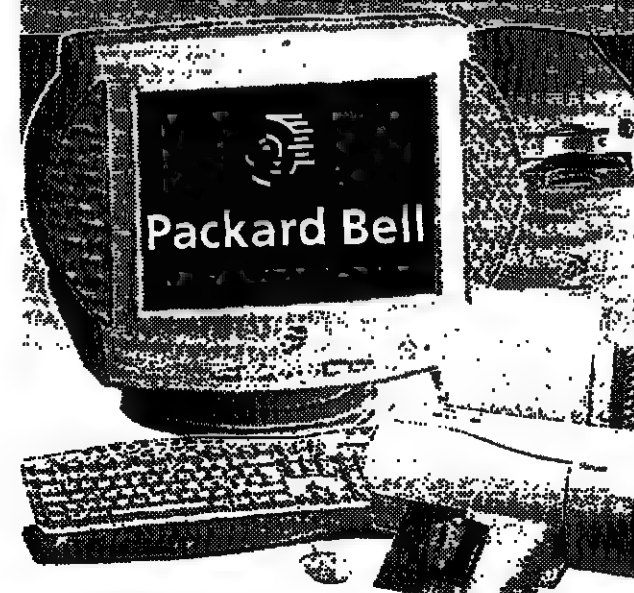


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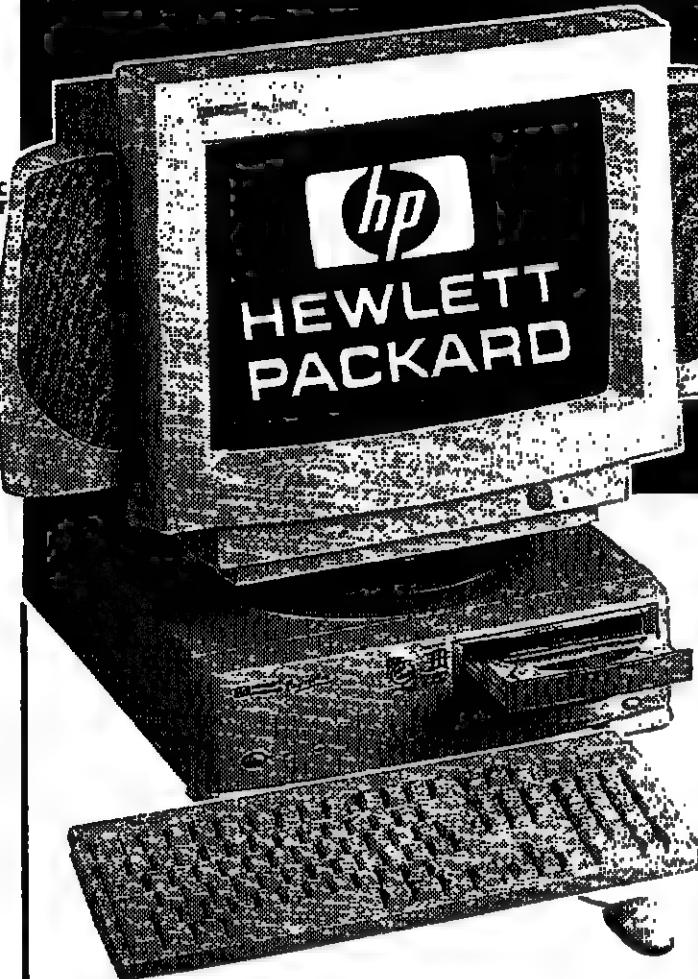
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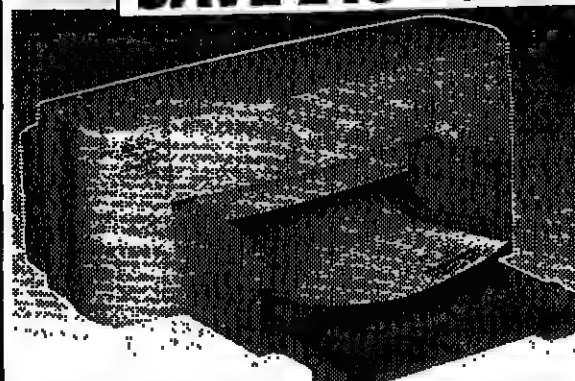
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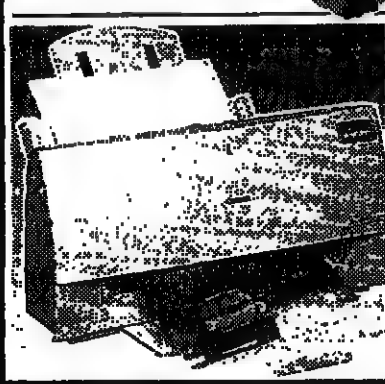
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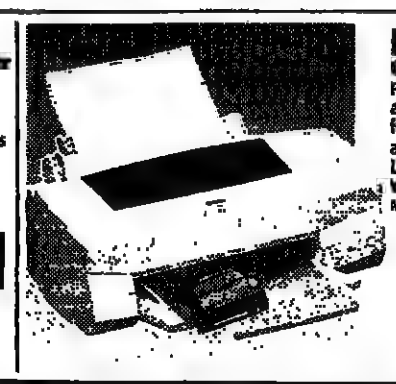


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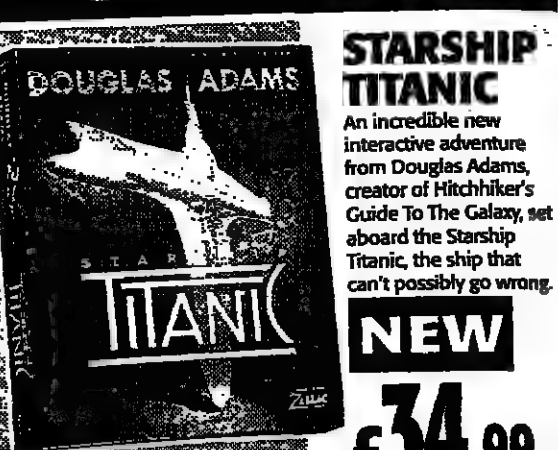
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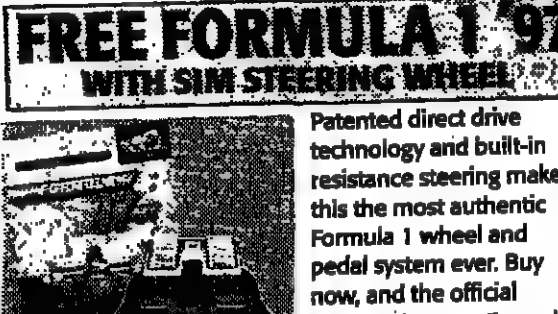
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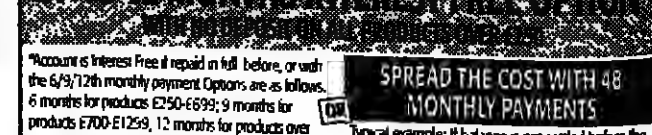
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Homeless dancer rescued from the streets with frostbitten toes looks back on the Fonteyn of his youth



Margot's magic recalled by black ballet pioneer

JAMES BONE'S
NEW YORK



ARTHUR Bell's once-famous toes were suffering from frostbite when he was picked up recently by two ambulance men who saw him stumbling off a pavement in Brooklyn. The elderly and disoriented homeless man was taken to a city hospital, where he was identified from his social security card. Soon, however, he was being looked after by the orderlies with tales of his life as a ballet dancer in London, Paris and New York, and how he once went on stage with Margot Fonteyn.

Although the emergency room of any New York hospital is full of people who claim to be the King of Spain, Mr Bell's memories turned out not to be the ravings of a deluded man. Now 71, the frail patient was once a dancing pioneer who became the first black person to perform with the New York City Ballet. He was chosen as a guest soloist by Sir Frederick Ashton, the

British choreographer, to dance for the company's 1950 world premiere of *Illuminations*, based on the poetry of Arthur Rimbaud. Even now, as a wrinkled old man subsisting on government handouts, he can still hum every note of Benjamin Britten's music for the piece.

The eldest of a Southern preacher's nine children, Mr Bell's odyssey could be a ballet on its own. At a time when black people were largely excluded from big ballet companies, he jumped on a Greyhound bus to liberal New York and, while working in a dress warehouse, attended classes. While rehearsing for *Illuminations*, Mr Bell limbered up on stage with Fonteyn, who was appearing in

a New York production of *Sleeping Beauty* by the Royal Ballet, which Sir Frederick ran. "She was a great treasure," he recalls. "I have never been the same since." Mr Bell moved to Paris in the early 1950s. He gave up dancing as he approached 40 and returned to New York, where he did clerical jobs until about six years ago. He now lives on a pension of \$400 (£240) a month, and cannot recall how he became homeless.

□ I spent the weekend at Ian Schrager's Delano Hotel on Miami's South Beach, a favoured retreat for sun-starved New Yorkers. What a culture shock. The severe minimalist Philip Starck interiors I could deal with. What I couldn't handle was the topless sunbathers with breast implants chatting incessantly on their cell phones as they (the sunbathers, I mean) floated in the pool all day.



Bell has not lost his memories of career

Cheat buster puts money on Starr

BEAUTIFUL decoys are the way Jerry Palace, seen above on the streets of New York with two of his teasing assistants, claims to have caught more than 1,000 cheating husbands. So I sought out his professional opinion on the President's sex life, which still dominates conversation here.

Mr Palace's Check-a-Mate detective agency has earned notoriety in America for charging \$125 (£75) an hour (five hours minimum) to send

alleged mistress of Bill Clinton, for Kenneth Starr, the Independent Counsel, that I felt sure Mr Palace would give me the low-down.

The hard-boiled former homicide detective had nothing but praise for Ms Tripp's covert action: "If I were a betting man, and I am, I would say there is definitely something there and it's being protected pretty well," he said. Mr Palace had just returned from Hollywood, where he is exploring a movie deal about his work.

One for the road leads to \$12m suit

ELAINE KAUFMAN, the society saloon keeper, is marshalling her celebrity supporters to fight allegations that she clawed a customer who refused to buy a drink.

Ms Kaufman was dragged away by police from her legendary bar, Elaine's, on the Upper East Side after arguing with an Arkansasian and his date (who had moved to the city from California just the day before) when they ordered one drink between them — a \$6 (£3.60) gin and tonic — because the man was driving. "She asked if the problem was that I didn't have enough money," said Jim Sorrells, 49. "Then she called us 'white trash'." When he politely told her that she was acting "like a pig", the 69-year-old grande dame allegedly scratched him down the cheek. "He could have had a knife or something," she said. Mr Sorrells is suing for \$12 million.

□ A New York comedy club held a competition for funniest gay person. "Think of a world populated exclusively by gay men," suggested a contestant, Tom Rovine. "For example, if directory assistance were staffed entirely by gay men, you would get operators saying things like, 'You want the number for Nobu? Puh-lease, that restaurant is so two-weeks-ago'."

□ My local gym has started offering "Firefighter Aero-



EYEBROWS are being raised by Natasha Richardson as she tells people her husband Liam Neeson, who will star as Oscar Wilde above, in *The Wilde Man*, was more a companion with the famous homosexual than one might think. No, not that. "Most think 'Wilde' an effete Englishman," she says. "He was a scrapping 6'4" Irishman."

bics". Eric Torres, from the fire station, puts the fitness freaks through their paces with the equivalent of fireman's basic training. Moves include carrying a heavy hose, ladder-climbing and welding an axe to break down doors. Mr Torres plays a tape of a real emergency call to give the session a sense of urgency.

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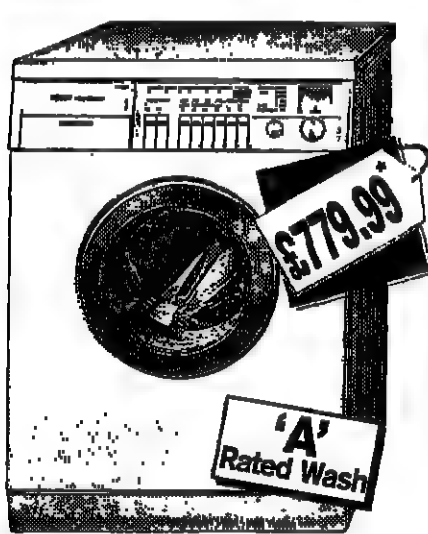
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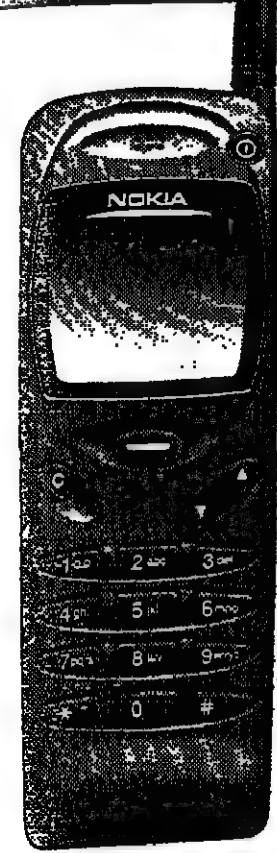
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'Misguided' pilgrims mark Christ's final journey in streets of Jerusalem

FROM CHRISTOPHER WALKER
IN JERUSALEM

THOUSANDS of Christians who flocked to Jerusalem yesterday to follow in the footsteps of Christ on his way to Gethsemane may have taken the wrong route.

Jerusalem's leading Bible scholar, Jerome Murphy-O'Connor of the Ecole Biblique, disputes that the route taken annually by Good Friday pilgrims along the Stations

of the Cross and Via Dolorosa has any connection to the path Jesus took to his Crucifixion.

According to the Irish-born scholar, author of the main modern archaeological guide to the Holy Land, Jerusalem was not built up to nearly the supposed level at the time, and evidence indicates that Jesus went in a different direction.

The Christians who began following the prayer route of 14th-

century Franciscan friars "were more interested in piety than history", said Father Murphy-O'Connor, who adds that it is probable Pontius Pilate condemned Jesus to death on the other side of the city.

Father Murphy-O'Connor regularly guides visiting diplomats and statesmen on biblical walks through the Jerusalem area. He said that, approaching the millennium, the route taken by yesterday's procession was sanctified by tradition. "And you do get the same experience of walking in a narrow street, being jostled around by the crowd."

Yesterday's event — led by an elderly man in a loincloth, with a crown of thorns and a heavy cross on his shoulder — was held in a heatwave. The faithful made their way under the eyes of Israeli soldiers cradling assault rifles, whose presence had been boosted

after a fresh warning of terror attacks following the assassination last week of Hamas's master bombmaker, Muhyideen al-Sharif.

The procession's leader had red paint dripping from the "wound" caused by the thorns. "Jesus needs your help. Who is going to help him?" another pilgrim dressed as a Roman soldier shouted. His words echoed through the narrow alleys of the Old City, annexed by Israel

after its capture from Jordan in the 1967 war.

"The Old City is beautiful. I cannot describe it. It is like Jesus is walking among us. But it is sad that the people of Jerusalem are suffering like Jesus," said George Constantinou, 63, from the Greek island of Rhodes as he wiped tears from his eyes. He was referring to the Palestinian inhabitants of east Jerusalem, many of whom are on their way to pray in Jerusalem's Al

Aqsa mosque, were held back by Israeli troops as the procession passed.

In another part of the Old City, a leading Israeli archaeologist claimed to have uncovered the main road that Jesus took when he visited the Jewish Temple. "Visitors will be able to walk on the streets of Jerusalem as they were in Jesus's time," said Gideon Avni, who disclosed that the site would be opened before 2000.

Jesus had AB blood, says shroud expert

A SCIENTIST in Turin claimed yesterday to have identified Jesus's blood group as AB after tests on the Turin Shroud, which many continue to believe is Christ's burial cloth.

Pierluigi Baima Bollone, Professor of Forensic Medicine at Turin University, said the blood tests were revealed in his new book, *The Shroud: The Proof* (Sindone: La Prova), to be published by Mondadori next week.

The shroud, which carbon-dating tests have suggested is a medieval fake, goes on show next Saturday at Turin Cathedral for the first time in 20 years. Already 700,000 telephone bookings have been made to see the shroud, which will be displayed for 65 days before being rolled up again and stored in a new fire-and-bomb-proof container. It has survived several blazes since its existence was first recorded in France in the 14th century, and was saved from a mysterious blaze at Turin Cathedral a year ago.

Photographic negatives of the cloth in 1898 revealed the image of a man bearing the marks of crucifixion. Carbon-



dating tests carried out in 1988 showed that the cloth dated from the 13th or 14th centuries. But shroud scholars, known as sindonologists, continue to argue that the carbon dating was flawed, and that no medieval forger could either have faked the Crucifixion details so accurately or anticipated the invention of photography.

Professor Bollone, who heads the International Centre of Sindonology in Turin, said the image showed the marks of nails through the wrists and not through the palms, which

**Richard Owen
in Rome looks
at new claims
surrounding
DNA and stains
found on Turin
'burial cloth'**

was consistent with Roman practice, although a medieval faker would probably not have known this. He said it was still not known how the image was formed. But there were traces of DNA — a claim also made recently by the author Ian Wilson — and there was "AB human blood".

He said it was striking that there was no image beneath the blood stains, "from which we can deduce that the image was formed after the bleeding occurred". This would bolster the theory that the man bled because he was "subjected to a

series of traumas which caused his death". In the case of Jesus, flagellation was followed by the Crucifixion.

Panorama magazine said the shroud remained "the most disconcerting archaeological find of all time". It said that, although some scholars believed the man on the shroud was too tall to have been a 1st-century Palestinian, the cloth contained pollen from plants known to have existed in Palestine at that time. The Pope, who will visit the shroud next month, has described it as "an object worthy of veneration" but has stopped short of declaring it genuine.

The pontiff yesterday led the traditional Good Friday Stations of the Cross service, carrying a wooden cross around the Colosseum, the site of early Christian martyrdom in ancient Rome. Six women representing five continents helped the ailing 76-year-old Pope to carry the cross.

Reservations to see the shroud can be made by calling freephone 0800 967951. Tickets are free.

Weekend, page 1



Vincent Siew, Taiwan's Prime Minister, admires a replica of the Brussels Manneken Pis with Mr Siew's own head, given to him by a right-wing MP

Iranian women put the boot in

FROM MICHAEL THEODOULOU
IN NICOSIA

IRANIAN women have won the right to play football, despite the claims of indecency by outraged hardliners.

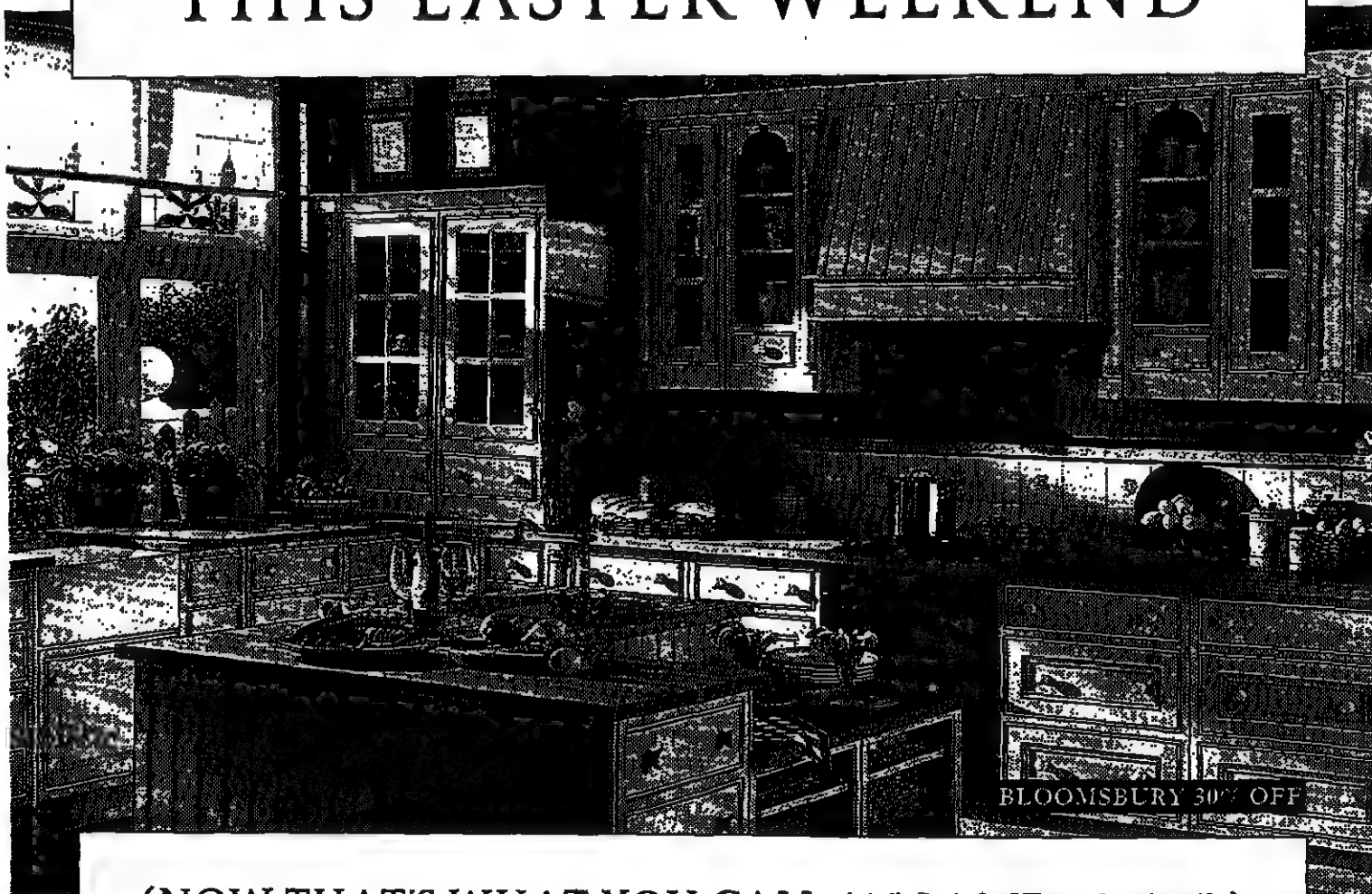
With football fever gripping Iran as the national team prepares to take on America in the World Cup, there is also mounting pressure to lift the ban on women attending men's soccer matches.

Such advances highlight the ferment in Iranian society after the election of President Khatami, a moderate cleric, last year. But the issue has been overshadowed by a bitter dispute over the detention on embezzlement charges of Tehran's popular Mayor, Gholamhossein Karbaschi. The row could prove a decisive turning point in the Islamic revolution.

Mr Karbaschi's supporters insist his arrest last weekend was a politically motivated act of revenge by the hardline judiciary to punish him for supporting Mr Khatami. The mayor's supporters threatened to organise mass street protests this week to free him from Tehran's notorious Evin prison.

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Economic surge boosts US surplus

FROM IAN BRODIE
IN WASHINGTON

AMERICA'S surging economy is likely to push the federal budget surplus in this financial year to at least \$50 billion (£30 billion), it was reported yesterday.

Tax dollars are pouring into the US Treasury as Americans scramble to meet a deadline of next Wednesday for filing income-tax returns. The influx has been fuelled by low unemployment, the Wall Street boom and a cut in long-term capital gains taxes from 28 to 20 per cent that was insisted on by Republicans last year.

If the new projection proves to be right, the target of reaching a balanced budget hammered out in a hard-fought agreement between President Clinton and the Republicans in July will have been beaten by four years. It would mark the first time since 1969 that the US Government had taken in more than it had spent.

The projection was said to come from an internal document of the Federal Reserve Board and was first reported by *The Washington Post*, although a statement from the board cautioned that the size of the surplus remained highly uncertain. Both official and private estimates varied over a considerable range, but much more would be known in the next few weeks as tax returns were processed, the statement said.

Anticipations of a hefty surplus are ratcheting up on several fronts. Earlier this week, the Congressional Budget Office increased its surplus prediction from \$8 billion to \$18 billion for the financial year ending next September 30. Some private economists are forecasting that the surplus could soar to \$75 billion.

Barely defiant Duma delays Yeltsin choice

FROM ROBIN LODGE
IN MOSCOW

THE State Duma made a show of defiance yesterday by rejecting President Yeltsin's nominee for Prime Minister, but by a far smaller margin than expected, indicating his candidacy will eventually be approved.

Sergei Kiriyenko, the 35-year-old former Energy Minister who has been acting Prime Minister since Mr Yeltsin dismissed his entire Government last month, was backed by 143 deputies in the 450-seat legislature with 186 voting against him. Afterwards he said he was pleased and surprised to have received so much support in the first round, but regretted the formation of a new government would be further delayed.

Mr Yeltsin immediately wrote to the Duma Speaker, Gennadi Seleznyov, reaffirming Mr Kiriyenko's nomination. The assembly has to vote again within seven days. If it rejects Mr Yeltsin's choice three times it faces dissolution and new parliamentary elections. Few believe it will come to that.

The vote scarcely reflected the earlier debate's belligerence, when only one faction leader, Aleksandr Shokhin of Our Home is Russia, supported Mr Kiriyenko. He faced a barrage of questions from hostile deputies determined to expose his inexperience and lack of ability, but was calm, authoritative and painstakingly polite. He was also extremely dull.

But if the deputies were impressed by his knowledge and unflappability, they gave no sign in speeches after the question-and-answer session. One by one, they called for his rejection. Even Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, the maverick ul-



Kiriyenko: surprised at level of Duma support

tra-nationalist who had said earlier that his Liberal Democratic Party would support Mr Kiriyenko, spoke against him vehemently.

His opposition was not, however, on grounds of youth or lack of experience, but because in his view Mr Kiriyenko had reneged on what Mr Zhirinovskiy said was a pledge by Mr Yeltsin to include Liberal Democrat members in the next government. "He is being disloyal to the President," he said.

Mr Kiriyenko has yet to name his government, but is expected to do so next week. Yesterday he merely confirmed reports that the acting Foreign, Interior, Defence and Finance Ministers — Yevgeni Primakov, Sergei Stepashin, Igor Sergeyev and Mikhail Zadornov — would keep their jobs in his Cabinet. All are acceptable to the Duma.

Wisely he made no mention of more contentious personalities such as Boris Nemtsov, acting First Deputy Prime Minister, or his dismissed former colleague, Anatoli Chubais, reviled by almost every Duma member. He was also careful not to be nailed down on government policies.

George Michael leaves refuge

George Michael, far right, leaves his Beverly Hills home with an unidentified friend, the star's first public appearance since his arrest for "lewd conduct" in a Los Angeles park (Giles Whittell writes). The pop singer braved a throng of reporters encamped outside the Malibu home of David Geffen, the Dreamworks studio executive and recording billionaire, where he had taken refuge after the events of Tuesday. The star had a meal on Thursday night with two friends at Spago, a local restaurant.



Iraqis accused by UN of continuing anthrax cover-up

By JAMES BONE IN NEW YORK AND MICHAEL BINYON, DIPLOMATIC EDITOR

THE United Nations has given a warning that Iraq may be continuing to hide the scope of its biological warfare programme, despite Baghdad's recent agreement to allow weapons inspectors into its presidential palaces.

A UN report on the outcome of a week-long meeting between Iraqi officials and a panel of international arms experts in Vienna last month says Baghdad's disclosures about its biological weapons are "incomplete and inadequate". The report expresses concern that Iraq is hiding details of its production of the biological warfare agents anthrax, botulinum toxin and aflatoxin, and has failed to account for bombs designed to deliver the lethal agents.

"Iraq has presented falsified or altered papers, accounts and material to conceal its offensive BW [biological warfare] programme," the report says. "Since February 1996

Iraq has not provided further documentation or plausible explanations for many aspects of its BW programme. It is not certain whether deception with regard to some elements of the BW programme continues."

The panel's conclusion virtually guarantees that the next six-monthly assessment of Baghdad's co-operation with UN weapons inspectors — due out in the coming days — will provide no grounds for easing UN sanctions.

Diplomats predict that the six-monthly report will also detail problems during the inspection of President Saddam Hussein's eight presidential palaces by combined teams of weapons inspectors and diplomats. During those visits, Iraqi officials objected to helicopter overflights of the sites and tried to impede access to certain documents.

The Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency,

in its separate six-monthly report on Iraq's nuclear potential, said that it still lacked information on certain sites involved in the production of nuclear-related materials, equipment and components.

Baghdad called last night for a boycott of the conference that Britain will host to speed up the delivery of the extra food which Iraq will be able to import in exchange for an increase in permitted oil sales.

Muhammad al-Sahaf, the Iraqi Foreign Minister, called the conference a "devious attempt, both in its formulation and its goals, because Britain is not neutral". He said it was a way of providing cover to make UN sanctions binding.

Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, has invited all groups and agencies involved in the oil-for-food programme to the conference — in London on April 20 and 21.

Leading article, page 23



In fighting form: Russian Polykarpov warplanes of Second World War vintage fly over New Zealand's Mount Aspiring National Park near Wanaka on South Island yesterday. The planes, one piloted by Mark Hanna, a Briton, are among highlights at Wanaka's annual air show

WORLD IN BRIEF

Baby rescued from tornado rubble

New York: A nine-month-old baby, buried under a collapsed house, was found alive by rescuers after tornadoes swept through parts of southeast America, killing at least 42 people (Tunku Varadarajan writes). The baby, detected by a helicopter equipped with heat sensors, had spent nearly 24 hours in the debris of the home in Pleasant Grove, Alabama.

The State took the brunt of the destruction, wrought by huge hailstones and winds of up to 250mph, and 32 people died there. President Clinton declared portions of Alabama and Georgia disaster areas. The National Weather Service said the tornado was F-5 — its most powerful rating.

Paula Jones likely to appeal

Washington: Paula Jones is expected to appeal against the dismissal of her sexual harassment lawsuit against President Clinton (Ian Brodie writes). She is expected to announce her decision at a press conference in Dallas on Thursday. An appeal would take the case to the federal Court of Appeal in St Louis, which is known for its conservative views. Lawyers consider that its judges are more likely to back Judge Susan Webber Wright, who summarily dismissed the case last week in Arkansas, than to grant Mrs Jones's request for a jury trial. If Mrs Jones were to lose in St Louis, she could seek a Supreme Court ruling.

Tourists hurt in park blast

Istanbul: A bomb exploded in a park in the heart of Istanbul's tourist district, lightly wounding nine people including three foreigners, Turkish authorities said. There were no serious injuries. Authorities at the nearby Haseki Hospital said two Indians and a New Zealander were among those hurt in the blast, adding that the worst injury was a broken leg. A short stretch of cracked paving stone and strewn rubble were visible in the small park in Sultanahmet, surrounded by cafés and museums of Istanbul's Byzantine and Ottoman past. (Reuters)

Greek Orthodox head dies

The death at 85 of Archbishop Seraphim, left, head of the independent Orthodox Church of Greece, is expected to open one of the most conservative churches in the Eastern Orthodox faith to a breath of modernisation (John Carr writes). Seraphim, a resistance fighter during the Second World War, was at its helm for 25 years, refusing to go despite ill health. He defended its independence from the state, having sanctioned democracy, but the Church made little intellectual progress.

Thais deny deal on Pol Pot

Bangkok: Thailand denied it had made any deal with America to capture Pol Pot, the former Khmer Rouge leader, but said the issue may have come up during regular bilateral talks. A Foreign Ministry spokesman was responding to a New York Times report that President Clinton had ordered plans for his arrest, and that the Thai Government had suggested it would be willing to take Pol Pot into custody if America agreed to spirit him out of Thailand speedily. (Reuters)

Vote victory for Pinochet

Valparaiso: Augusto Pinochet, 82, was handed a new victory when Chilean lawmakers here rejected a move to strip the former dictator of his lifetime Senate seat, which would have cleared him to stand trial for human rights offences. After a heated, 12-hour debate, the Chamber of Deputies voted by 62-52, with one abstention, against a measure to impeach General Pinochet. Loud protests erupted in the chamber and a banner saying "Chile pardons its traitors" was unfurled. (AFP)

Parents reject 'racist' bonus

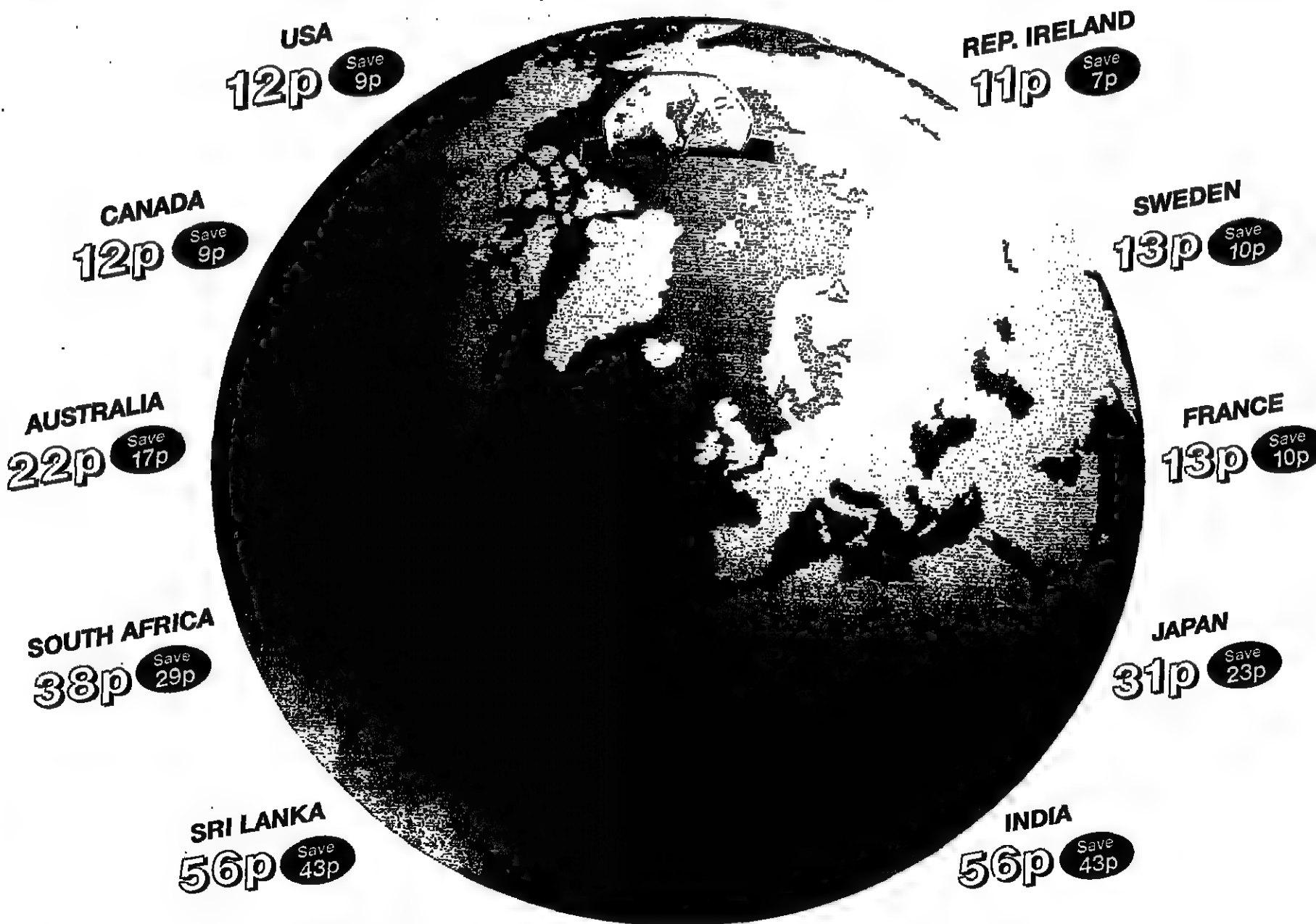


Marseilles: The first couple to benefit from a cash bonus paid by the far-right National Front to native French parents said they would send the money back. Veronique Delessert and her husband, who got Fr5,000 (£500) from Bruno Mégret, above, chief of Vitrolles town council, after the birth of a girl, said the scheme discriminated against non-European immigrants. (Reuters)

So who really needs \$8.5m?

New York: A 73-year-old woman has given \$8.5 million (£5 million), her entire winnings from a lottery jackpot, to her New Jersey parish council (Tunku Varadarajan writes). Eleanor Boyer said: "I have my pension and social security. I have everything I need. Why let the money sit in the bank till I die?" Friends joked that she had given up the money for Lent.

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Overfishing dooms North Sea skate

THE common skate, one of the world's most graceful swimmers, a formidable predator and an excellent companion to malt vinegar and chips, is extinct off British shores.

Scientists charting the plight of fish stocks in the North and Irish Sea now believe it is gone and, given new insights into its lifestyle, is unlikely to return. Overfishing is to blame.

Paddy Walker, a British fisheries expert at the Netherlands Institute for Sea Research in Texel, whose findings will be published soon, said yesterday: "Before the First World War around half the catch of some European trawlers was common skate. But it is safe to say it is extinct and gone from the North Sea, apart from sporadic catches in the winter off the Shetlands."

Fish and chip shops still continue to sell "skate and chips", but Ms Walker said the food was no longer the common skate but a smaller and, many would argue, less succulent fish called thornback ray.

In an attempt to protect stocks of all skates and rays in the North Sea, fisheries ministers have for the first time agreed quotas for these fish.

The quotas have just come into force. Dr Joe Harwood, assistant director of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's Centre for the Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science in Lowestoft, said these total allowable catches amounted to 6,000 tonnes, of which Britain can land 3,920 tonnes a year.

Ms Walker, whose findings are to be published in the International Council for the

Experts say the fish is now extinct off Britain and quotas for related catches are in operation, Nick Nuttall writes

Exploration of the Seas' *Journal of Marine Science*, said the move was welcome and might help to conserve species such as thornback, spotted and cuckoo rays from over-exploitation.

"But I think any management measures for the common skate will be too late," she said. Ms Walker, who has studied unique fishing data from Scotland dating back to the 1920s, has charted the abundance of various skates and rays. It shows that the large species, caught and used for food or animal feeds, have sharply declined, leaving the sea open to faster-maturing,

smaller ones, such as the commercially unimportant starry ray.

The disappearance of the common skate really began in earnest in the mid-1950s with catches dwindling sharply, the new records show. Between 1981 and 1995 the size of skates and rays found by fisheries scientists fell, with none measuring more than 70cm (2ft 3in). Female common skates become mature at between 140cm and 180cm.

"This means that in the period 1981 to 1995 all the breeding females of the common skate have gone," said Ms Walker.

The demise of the common skate underscores the damage being done in fisheries across the globe, especially to long-lived species at the top of the food chain. Common skate feed on bottom-living fish, such as sole and plaice. There is evidence they can live to be 40 years old and take around 12 years to become sexually mature, by which time they weigh more than 100lb.

The intense fishing effort in the North Sea since the Second World War means that, like ood, common skate have been caught in increasing amounts before they are sexually mature and able to replace themselves.

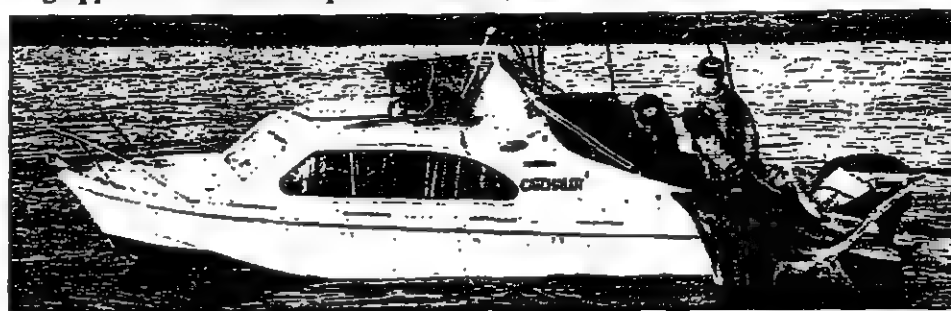
A small Atlantic population of common skate, *Raja batia*, do cling on in the waters around the Isle of Mull. They have become the focus of a unique partnership between scientists and anglers who have been tagging the fish.

Davy Holt, an angler and unemployed engineer living in Clydebank who is working on the project, said yesterday that the fish seemed to live in and around the waters of Mull all year around. The finding has dispelled an old Scottish fishing myth that common skate moved far offshore in the winter. Mr Holt said the findings showed that recolonisation of the North Sea was unlikely.

Mr Holt's love affair with the common skate dates back to 1993 when he caught a small 40lb specimen. "I thought wow. It had these big sad eyes like a cow. A fantastic creature. They do not flap around when you hold them and do not try to bite you," he said.



Bill Little, an angler and volunteer who is collating the skate tagging project, grapples with a sizeable specimen. Below, David Holt's vessel at work off Mull



Fires may wipe out apes in Indonesia

By Victoria Fletcher

THOUSANDS of the world's last wild orang-utans have been killed by forest fires in Indonesia. Experts believe the species could now face extinction.

In the last few weeks, fires in the Kalimantan region of Borneo and in Sumatra have destroyed more than a third of the orang-utans' forest habitat. The apes, which usually live high in the trees, have tried to escape the smoke by descending to the ground and heading for the open land of farms and villages. However, severe famine and drought means that the animals — once revered in Indonesian folklore — are now either killed and eaten or sold as exotic pets to rich Indonesians.

Barita Manullang, adviser for the World Wide Fund for Nature's Orang-utan Conservation Project in Indonesia, says apes fleeing the fires stand little chance of survival. "A few orang-utans, especially babies who have had their mothers killed, are reported to us and we can save them in time and send them to a rehabilitation sanctuary. But now there are so many fires, the orang-utans have fewer places to go and are being forced into different parts of the forest."

Estimates in 1993 suggested that there were between 16,000 and 25,000 orang-utans left in the wild. Fires destroyed massive areas of Borneo and Sumatra late last year before returning even more ferociously this year. In 1997, much of Tanjung Puting National Park in Kalimantan — home to many of Indonesia's orang-utans — was destroyed.



The grizzly: faces hostile welcome in the backwoods

Ranchers steer rural alliance against return of grizzly

By Tunku Varadarajan

A RURAL insurrection, mounted by cattle ranchers, farmers and worried mothers, is threatening to derail an ambitious plan to bring back the grizzly bear to the Bitterroot mountains, a rugged range between Montana and Idaho where the animal became extinct 50 years ago.

The plan is the brainchild of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, which is fighting to arrest the dizzying decline of a bear it calls "magnificent". Locals in the Bitterroots, however, see the bear — quite

simply, and without an ounce of sentiment — as grizzly.

More than 200,000 grizzly bears, so named because of their white-tipped fur, once inhabited the lower states of America, outside Alaska. Now, excluding Alaska, where an estimated 30,000 remain, there are 800 to 1,000. Tens of thousands of the animals were wiped out by a combination of predator control, the destruction of their forest habitat, commercial trapping and hunting for sport.

The Bitterroots are one of six ecosystems identified by the wildlife

service as a habitat suitable for the recovery of grizzly bear populations. Although the plan calls for the introduction of a mere five bears a year, beginning in 2000, local opposition is growing more shrill by the day.

Officials from the forest service have published reports which show that more than 75 per cent of people in the area are vehemently opposed to the project. Opponents include the Governor of Idaho, who says that the state will sue to keep the bears out, and Steve Mealey, the director of the state fish and game depart-

ment. Under state law, no wildlife can be reintroduced into Idaho without a licence from Mr Mealey, and he has said that he will not issue one.

Ranchers' groups and farmers have threatened to take "all necessary measures" to keep the bears out, and parents' groups have signed petitions saying that the presence of bears in isolated rural outposts would put their children's lives at risk. No one has threatened openly to shoot bears on sight, but there is little doubt that folk will see their rifles as a valid option.

□ **Bullets bounce off:** The grizzly bear, *Ursus horribilis*, can be extremely dangerous when challenged or disturbed.

Grizzlies can weigh 750lb (53st) and stand 7ft 6in tall. They have enormous paws and their first action, when angry, is to make a fearsome swatting gesture. Hunters report that bullets often bounce off the bears' two-inch-thick skulls.

Yet the grizzly is not as dangerous as the polar bear, *Thalarchos maritimus*. These bears, which live exclusively on the polar ice cap, are the only ones known to hunt people.

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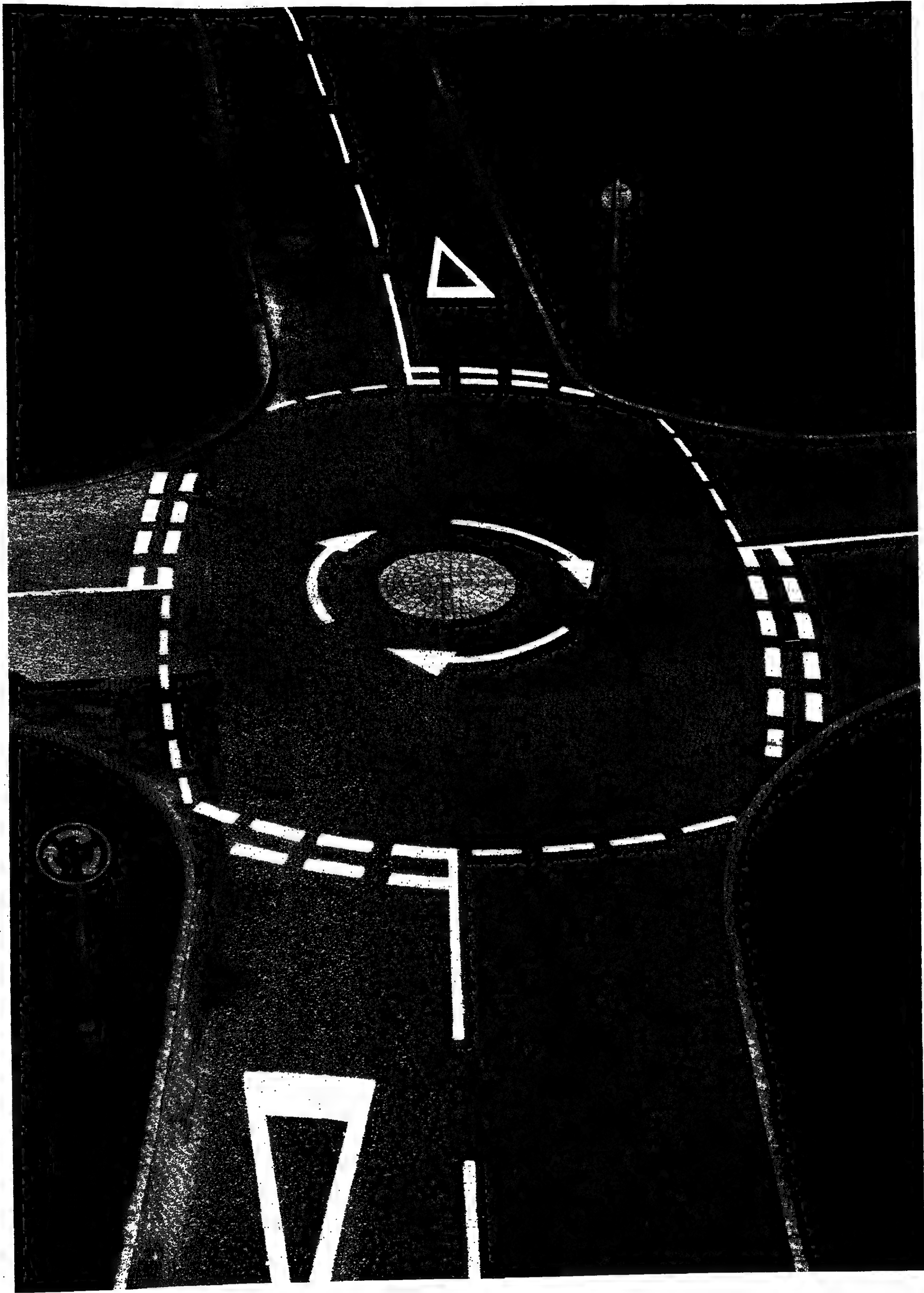
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Billy Wright's England caps at Christie's: his 100th cap for his country is at centre of front row

Soccer trivia bids reach fever pitch

Russell Jenkins on how transfer prices are soaring for old boots, faded shirts and the battered trophies of yesteryear

Shirts of Germany's Weber and England's Hunt at Sotheby's

Competition between a new generation of museums dedicated to international and club football is forcing up the auction prices of once-derided items of soccer memorabilia.

In the past, fans have rarely contemplated the artefacts of the sport's rich heritage beyond idly wondering how much their pile of old match-day programmes mouldering in the attic might be worth. But a switch of focus by museum buyers, the explosion in soccer theme cafés and a growing number of individual collectors have transformed battered old boots, faded shirts and the tarnished trophies won by soccer stars into highly prized items.

Christie's auctions of soccer memorabilia have matured since their first sale in 1989 when 200 lots fetched £5,000. But bidders fought tooth and nail at Phillips' sale in Cardiff this week to get their hands on a rare set of programmes for Merthyr Town's brief escapade in the league in the 1920s. In fast and furious bidding, three programmes

for matches raised more than £1,500.

George Cohen's World Cup winner's medal, the greatest prize so far, is expected to fetch more than £80,000 when it is sold by Christie's in June. In between, anything from soccer's postwar "golden age", spanned by Billy Wright's lengthy tenure as England captain, is snapped up. Most collectable is memorabilia shedding light on the era of the Busby Babes. The collections of Billy Wright, Ray Kennedy, Dixie Dean and Danny Blanchflower have raised up to six figures.

Rarer items are also proving attractive. A shirt from England's first official international, against Scotland in 1872 at the West of Scotland cricket ground in Glasgow, fetched £20,000. It belonged to Arnold Kirke-Smith, an Oxford University player selected once for the national side.

For obscure value, this is only matched by the collection, including international caps, of Peter O'Dowd, who played three times

for England in the 1930s as well as for Burnley, Blackburn and Chelsea.

Mike Ashton, the Phillips sports memorabilia consultant, said: "Football memorabilia has really taken off. Prices have gone sky high, so much so it is difficult to compare them with three to four years ago. There is a boom in this market. I cannot get enough quality football material. We have theme cafes and now there are the buyers from the museums as well as the general collectors and dealers in the market. They have all pushed prices up much higher."

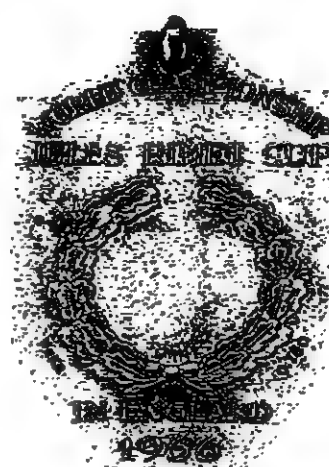
Anything that has provenance will sell very well. If a particular item — a cap or ball — can be linked to a particular game or individual, it will enhance its value. Several sales ago, the international jersey presented by Bobby Moore to the surgeon who delivered his first child, along with a photograph showing the joyous occasion, fetched £1,500. Reports that his first wife, Tina, is ready to

part with more is whipping the market into a frenzy.

Pelé, the legendary Brazilian star, officially opened the £4 million state-of-the-art Manchester United museum at Old Trafford yesterday. He will loan it his personal collection — the first time it has been displayed outside his home country.

The Football Museum in Preston, being planned with the help of a £7.6 million lottery grant, is due to open in autumn next year. Football will be coming home for Preston North End's Deepdale ground, the last remaining site on which the game has been played since the foundation of the league. The display will be built around the Fifa collection. Sir Tom Finney has shown his appreciation by donating a number of mementoes from his career, including the cap, signed programmes and a drinking bowl presented after a match against Argentina.

Meanwhile, a permanent exhibition of soccer photographs of grounds around the world is open



A 1966 World Cup badge from Christie's, and football programmes at Phillips



The Sheriff of London shield in about 1900: it fetched £30,000



Pelé at the opening of the Manchester United museum yesterday

ing in Ambleside in the Lake District. The Homes of Football boasts that it is opening its doors ahead of any of the other collections.

Grant MacDougall, Christie's consultant, said: "A lot of clubs are realising their history is what the present club structure is based

upon. For many years, they did not think along those lines." After Christie's first sale of soccer memorabilia, later that year the auction house sold the late Alex James's 1930 FA Cup winner's medal for Arsenal.

"We soon realised there were people out there who were really

keen to own a cap or a winner's medal," Mr MacDougall said. "Since then, we have been slowly but surely going through some of the legendary names in British soccer."

He says that the single most costly item of memorabilia sold was a 6ft silver and bronze charity shield presented by the Sheriff of London in 1897, to be contested between the top professional and amateur sides of the day. It was so big that teams had to be photographed sitting around it. The trophy, that was too big for the winning team to carry around the pitch on a victory lap, went for £30,000.

Mr MacDougall recalls with pride the sale of Billy Wright's 100th England cap. It fetched £8,000. At Phillips, Mr Ashton speaks affectionately of a photograph album charting Sheffield United's progress through the cup and league in 1888-89. It made £5,500.

Football, pages 34-38

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Steel stops 'dithering' to seek a seat in the Scottish Parliament

By SHIRLEY ENGLISH

LORD STEEL of Aikwood has ended months of speculation by announcing that he will seek election to the Scottish parliament. The former Liberal leader, widely tipped to become the parliament's first Presiding Officer or Speaker, will today apply to join the Liberal Democrat candidate list for the Edinburgh and Lothian region.

Lord Steel said yesterday that since last year's devolution referendum he had been "like a man with a pair of whispering birds, each perched on a shoulder". In one ear, he was told: "Don't be daft. You've done 32 years in democratic politics. You can pontificate on platforms, including your comfortable bench in the House of Lords, and your fishing rod is under-used. Leave it to others."

But in the other, the "bird" reminded him that his experience and his link to Westminster via the Lords would be useful in the fledgling parliament and he

should "stop dithering and get stuck in". It will be up to the party membership in Lothian to endorse his application in a ballot. If successful, he will stand as an additional member for the 129-seat parliament at Holyrood, Edinburgh; 73 members will be elected next year using the traditional first-past-the-post system and 56 additional members will be drawn from eight regional lists by proportional representation. He will not have to leave the House of Lords.

The Liberal Democrats were short of high-profile candidates, despite long support for devolution. As a key-figure in the Lib-Lab pact of the late 1970s and a close friend of Donald Dewar, the Scottish Secretary, Lord Steel's involvement also raises the possibility of an alliance between the two parties in the face of growing nationalist support. Under proportional representation, no party is expected to win an outright majority.

He said: "For Scottish Liberal Democrats, the opportunities in the new

parliament are especially exciting. We are likely to experience consensus and coalition politics rather than a replication of the Westminster adversarial system. So what are the likely coalitions? Labour and Tory? Labour and SNP? Tory and SNP? It is surely more likely that the Lib Dems will be part of any equation."

Lord Steel, who lives at Aikwood Tower near Selkirk, became Britain's youngest MP at 26, when he won a by-election in the Scottish Borders in March 1965. He went on to hold the seat through eight subsequent elections until he retired from the Commons last year. As a veteran campaigner for devolution, he co-chaired the Scottish Constitutional Convention, a cross-party group that drew up the plans for change. He said: "Scotland is about to embark on redressing a wrong committed in 1707 when, in the course of sensibly entering the Union, the Scottish Parliament was abolished. Liberal leader Gladstone's vision of home rule all round is coming nearer. Our hour has come."

PHILIP HOWARD AT THE CLASSICAL ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

Veiled hints hide truth on women

THE classic commonplace says that a woman was not liberated in ancient society. Her proper place was under a man. But in a paper to the Classical Association Conference, Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones of Cardiff argued that a woman's lot was even worse than we supposed. He thinks that throughout Greek history she had to go heavily veiled.

This applied especially to the upper classes during their rare public appearances. At first this seems an odd theory. Only a handful of artistic sources show women cooped in heavy veils. However, far more pictures survive from the archaic to the Hellenistic period showing women with their heads covered with a *hennas* scarf. Like a modern Sloane Ranger.

Mr Llewellyn doubts these artistic sources. In particular, he thinks that the act described as "unveiling the bride" was meant to show the reverse. The bride is covering her face, not revealing it. But the conventions of Greek art

made this difficult to portray. Islamic and other modern veil societies suggests the reasons. The pollution thought to stream from a woman's hair, eyes and mouth needed to be concealed in public. It was one more way of making a woman socially invisible. Enveloping her with veils reconfirmed her modesty and prudence. The Greek texts from Homer onwards also suggest that covering that which is most desired was a sexual turn-on or, at worst, the camouflage for a sexual turn-off.

David Woods, from Maynooth University, told the conference at the University of Wales, Lampeter, that Caligula planned to bridge the Channel to invade Britain. His construction of a bridge of ships from Baiae to Puteoli in AD39 was a rehearsal. Mr Woods's proposition suggests that Caligula cannot have read Caesar's account of the hazards of the Channel, or perhaps that prudent military engineers were slow to argue with a tyrant.



Spartacus: a metaphor for racial disempowerment?

Artists' Rome truths

THE mythologies of the ancient world continue to influence modern artists such as Quentin Tarantino. Nicholas Gross, of Delaware University, argued that Stanley Kubrick's tortured visions of evil came from Ancient Rome. For example, in the gladiatorial contest in *Spartacus*, Kirk Douglas (playing a white Thracian) is fighting a black Ethiopian. Noble Roman matrons govt avidly. Crassus, who has spent a fortune to stage the show, discusses poli-

tics in the background with his senatorial gofer. But the story can also be read as a black American's political disempowerment, while Crassus's butchery of the black gladiator reveals his own dependence on his domination of the underclass. Other papers showed how space opera, that much maligned sub-genre of science fiction, closely follows old models. Asimov's decline and fall of the intergalactic empire is another ancient plot recycled.

Stand by your karaoke for Tammy rebirth

SOMETIMES it's hard to be a Tammy Wynette impersonator. The sudden death of the 55-year-old First Lady of Country on Tuesday — from a blood clot as she napped on a sofa at home in Nashville, Tennessee — has left performers across the nation, from country revues to pub singers, even karaoke belters, bereft. Anyone, even the worst bathroom warbler, could get an emotional rise from singing *Stand By Your Man*. And just about anyone did.

In America, the rivals to fill Wynette's rhinestone boots are already lining up. From the 15-year-old LeAnn Rimes, whose *How Do I Live?* recently became the biggest-selling country single, to Reba McEntire, whose empire is run from a \$10 million purpose-built office block in Nashville. Old favourites such as Loretta Lynn, Shania Twain and Crystal Gayle are also in the picture.

"Tammy Wynette was more than just a country and western singer in the West of Scotland," said Alex Fleming, President of the Grand Ole Opry, one of Britain's biggest country music clubs, which meets in Glasgow. "There is not a household which does not have at least one big Tammy Wynette fan. She was a star in her own right, beyond just country music. Most of our acts sing her songs." This weekend, as every weekend, Wynette's songs will be the most requested at the club. The pattern will be the same in country and western clubs across Britain, from the Fort San Antonio, a truckers' favourite near Preston, Lancashire, to the Farmer's Tavern, in a caravan site in

Philip Delves Broughton on the passing of 'a female Elvis'

north Devon which hosts the annual British Association of Gunslingers competition.

"I'm still very sad about her death," Sonia Hudson, 36, from Durham, said. She twice sang as Wynette on the ITV programme *Stars in Their Eyes*. "She was my heroine. When she died she was getting bigger and bigger. They loved her in Germany and China."

Hudson, who now sings as herself, but still sings Wynette songs, has a signed picture of her heroine in her front room and posters on her bedroom walls. "Tammy was the country equivalent of Elvis."

The comparison to Presley extends to the likelihood of a huge posthumous trade in Wynette records and memorabilia. In Nashville, hundreds

flocked to the Country Music Hall of Fame to pay tribute. When they found she had been omitted, there was a near-riot. A shrine is now promised.

Stand By Your Man was rereleased in America a week before Wynette died. Greatest hits albums are likely to follow. Not since Patsy Cline died 35 years ago has country music faced such a posthumous career.

Wynette became a hugely popular figure in gay clubs. *Stand By Your Man* became an unofficial gay anthem. It was not something of which the five-times married star particularly approved. "Tammy Wynette never sang in gay clubs," Alan Cackett, of *Country Music International* magazine, said. "Her song was taken over."

"She wasn't into women's rights either," John Empidge, editor of *Country Music Round Up*, added. "People tried to make her out to be either a downtrodden woman or a feminist heroine. But she was not interested in labels. She just sang about her life." It was the life as much as the songs that ensured Wynette's enduring popularity. Dolly Parton may have written more songs, but her implausible figure made her something of a joke. Wynette, by contrast, was not just the Queen of Heartbreak. She wore glittering dresses, drove a car with 4,000 silver dollars embedded in the dashboard and made grown men cry.

"She was a complete original," Sonia Hudson said. "Others tried to be like her but she is still the one everyone wants to sing and hear." Tonight, the stetsons will be nodding in agreement.



Rhinestone country: Tammy Wynette



Reba McEntire, 43

Origins: Oklahoma country girl now the flashiest woman in Nashville and the biggest-selling American female country star.

Show-stopper: *I Think His Name is John*, about a woman who has a one-night stand with a man whose name she cannot remember but who gave her AIDS. Concert style: draws on rock concerts, lots of lights and dramatics. Not for the country purist.

Compiled by Philip Delves Broughton



LeAnn Rimes, 15

Origins: poor Kentucky roots. Has already made a television film about her life and is now at work on her autobiography.

Show-stopper: *How Do I Live?*, biggest-selling country single of all time. Also *Surrender* and *Blue*. Concert style: Fearless vocalist. Yet to master the softly spoken links between songs. Bounces round the stage shouting instead, like the noisy teenager she is. The world's youngest self-made multimillionaire — last year she made \$96 million.



Shania Twain, 32

Origins: Canadian Ojibway Indian. Her life is country song made real: both parents died in a car crash when Shania was 21, leaving her to bring up three brothers and sisters with money from singing in cabaret for five years before hitting the big time. Her second album sold 13 million copies.

Show-stopper: *You're Still the One*, which she performed on the National Lottery draw programme. Concert style: another one to bring rock concert styles to country. The raunchiest of the current crop. Her name in Ojibway means "I'm on my way".

New classics put pressure on favourites

By Carol Midgley and Guy Walters

THE score for the epic film *Titanic*, as well as Sir Paul McCartney's symphonic work, *Standing Stone*, have broken through into the top 100 most popular classical tunes in Britain. John Taverner's *Song For Athens*,

which brought the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales, to a poignant close, has also entered the table in a development that points to the increasing popularisation of classical music.

Bruch's Violin Concerto No 1 in G minor is the No 1 choice for the third year running in the national poll conducted by Classic FM.

Station executives disclosed there had been a failed attempt to rig the voting by a rogue e-mailer who tried to cast hundreds of different nominations for composers including Eric Coates and Percy Grainger.

A total of 100,000 votes were cast in the poll, by telephone, e-mail or coupon. Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No 2 comes second for the third year running, while Mozart's Clarinet Concerto moves from fifth to third place.

However, it is the new



Bruch: favourite again

"popular" entries that are seen as the most significant. Taverner's work is the highest new entry at No 53. James Horner's score for the multiple Oscar-winning *Titanic* surfaces at No 75. One place below is McCartney, whose symphonic work was first broadcast in Britain last November.

Football's influence is also evident in the chart. *Ode To Joy*, from Beethoven's choral symphony, is at No 17 this year. In 1996, when the music was the theme tune for the Euro 96 tournament, it gained enough votes to take it to No 5.

Raymond Gubbay, the concert promoter, said: "All that a list like this does is to tell you about the listeners at Classic FM. The top ten seems very non-operatic, and I would have expected *The Pearl Fishers* to have been a lot higher."

John Allison, the *Times* critic, said the top ten choices all great masterpieces. "On the whole, it's a respectable list, with the odd flavour of the month, such as the *Titanic* score."

"It's also refreshing to see that the Taverner hasn't been bumped up too much by the death of Diana."

Stanley Glasser, Emeritus Professor of Music at the University of London, said the list showed that "ordinary folk are being slowly educated".

CLASSIC FM HALL OF FAME 1998

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 Bruch: Violin Concerto No 1 in G minor | 41 Beethoven: Piano Sonata No 14 in C# minor Op 27 No 2 |
| 2 Rachmaninov: Piano Concerto No 2 in C minor | 42 Tchaikovsky: Violin Concerto No 1 in D major |
| 3 Mozart: Clarinet Concerto | 43 Prokofiev: Violin Concerto No 1 in D major |
| 4 Beethoven: Symphony No 6 (The Pastoral) | 44 Rachmaninov: Symphony No 2 |
| 5 Vaughan Williams: The Lark Ascending | 45 Shostakovich: The Gadfly |
| 6 Mahler: Symphony No 5 (Requiem) | 46 Sibelius: Violin Concerto |
| 7 Schubert: Piano Sonata No 14 in D major | 47 Grieg: Peer Gynt Suite No 1 |
| 8 Elgar: Violin Concerto | 48 Debussy: La Mer |
| 9 Grieg: Piano Concerto in E minor | 49 J S Bach: Brandenburg Concertos |
| 10 Beethoven: Piano Concerto No 5 in E flat (The Emperor) | 50 Verdi: Requiem |
| 11 Pachelbel: Canon in D | 51 Rachmaninov: Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini Op 43 |
| 12 Shostakovich: Violin Concerto No 1 in A major | 52 Mozart: Marriage of Figaro |
| 13 Beethoven: Piano Sonata No 8 (Pathétique) | 53 Taverner: Song for Athens |
| 14 Elgar: Cello Concerto | 54 Tchaikovsky: Piano Concerto No 1 in B flat minor |
| 15 Prokofiev: Violin Concerto No 2 in G minor | 55 Chopin: Piano Concerto No 1 in E minor |
| 16 Mozart: Piano Concerto No 22 in C K467 | 56 J S Bach: Toccata and Fugue in D minor |
| 17 Beethoven: Piano Concerto No 3 in E flat (The Emperor) | 57 Beethoven: Piano Concerto No 2 in D major |
| 18 Bruch: Violin Concerto No 1 in G minor | 58 Tchaikovsky: 1812 Overture Op 48 |
| 19 Grieg: Piano Concerto in A minor | 59 Mahler: Symphony No 1 (The Titan) |
| 20 Mahler: Symphony No 1 (The Titan) | 60 Rachmaninov: Piano Concerto No 3 in D minor |
| 21 Beethoven: Violin Concerto in E minor | 61 Handel: Zadok the Priest |
| 22 Mahler: The Fourth | 62 Beethoven: Piano Sonata No 2 in A major Op 115 |
| 23 Vaughan Williams: Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis | 63 Beethoven: Piano Sonata No 14 in C# minor Op 27 No 2 |
| 24 Albinetti: Adagio for Organ and Strings in E minor | 64 Schubert: Piano Quintet in A (Trout) |
| 25 Mahler: Symphony No 1 | 65 Wagner: Toccata from Tristan and Isolde |
| 26 Rimsky-Korsakov: Sheherazade | 66 J S Bach: Toccata and Fugue in D minor |
| 27 Dvorak: Symphony No 9 in E minor (New World) | 67 Mahler: Piano and Harp Concerto |
| 28 J S Bach: Double Violin Concerto in D minor BWV 1043 | 68 Beethoven: Piano Concerto No 2 in D major |
| 29 Mahler: Symphony No 1 | 69 Chopin: Piano Concerto No 2 in F minor |
| 30 Beethoven: Piano Concerto No 5 in E flat (The Emperor) | 70 Beethoven: Piano Concerto No 3 in D minor |
| 31 Vaughan Williams: Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis | 71 Beethoven: Piano Concerto No 1 in E minor |
| 32 Verdi: Nabucco | 72 Beethoven: Piano Concerto No 2 in D major |
| 33 Prokofiev: Piano Concerto No 2 in G minor | 73 Shostakovich: Piano Concerto No 2 in F |
| 34 Beethoven: Piano Concerto No 3 in E flat | 74 Mozart: Eine Kleine Nachtmusik (Serenade No 23 in G) |
| 35 Prokofiev: Piano Concerto No 1 in D major | 75 Horner: Titanic (The Soundtrack) |
| 36 Prokofiev: Piano Concerto No 2 in G minor | 76 McCartney: Standing Stone Inc. Human |
| 37 Mahler: Symphony No 1 | 77 Beethoven: Piano Concerto No 3 in D minor |
| 38 Beethoven: Piano Concerto No 5 in E flat (The Emperor) | 78 Saint-Saëns: Carnival of the Animals |
| 39 Beethoven: Piano Concerto No 3 in D minor | 79 Tchaikovsky: Violin Concerto in D major |
| 40 Grieg: Piano Concerto in A minor | 80 Beethoven: Piano Concerto No 1 in E minor |



John Taverner's *Song for Athens* is the highest new entry to the chart at No 53

THE SUNDAY TIMES

NAUGHTYGATE

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The Sunday Times Magazine tomorrow

THE SUNDAY TIMES IS THE SUNDAY PAPERS

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Diana 'tat' and the man with a fund of goodness

The man chosen to run the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund had to be beyond reproach: circumspect, upright, with a steady hand, a dedication to public service and perhaps just a whiff of sanctity. They seem to have found this paragon in Andrew Purkis.

You would have found him last night singing (tenor) in the choir in the Tenebrae service at St Michael's, Battersea, where he also sang on Thursday night and yesterday morning. To see Dr Purkis at work, you go through the Tudor gateway of Lambeth Palace, pass Cardinal Pole's fig tree, ascend a hushed staircase and sit beneath a portrait of Archbishop Cosmo Lang.

Dr Purkis has sat here for six years as the Archbishop of Canterbury's senior adviser and spin-doctor, accustomed to damping down media misinterpretation. In June, he will move into another Thames-side palace, County Hall, former headquarters of the GLC. The Japanese owners have lent the fund a suite of offices rent-free for 20 years (a generous gift worth something like £3 million).

He should be just in time to calm the furies already unleashed over Diana dolls, scratchcards and margarine. As A.N. Wilson asked: "Isn't the memorial fund in danger of adding cant to the 'tackiness' charge? Once you've allowed the 'money for charity' argument to justify the sale of tat, is there any depth which could not be plumbed?"

Dr Purkis replies: "There are depths which should not be plumbed, but people's tastes differ. The Princess herself was not interested only in the tastes of Radio 4 listeners. One person's tat is perfectly acceptable to another, in a good cause."

"But one doesn't want to get too carried away with controversies," he adds. "The vast bulk of the fund is given, and is about giving. Problems about scratchcards and margarine have to be put in perspective. Nevertheless, clearly it is an area where we have to exercise great care and judgment on a case-by-case basis."

He is the imperturbable type. Perhaps it worked in his favour

that he never met the Princess. "She came to the palace with a leprosy mission, and I watched her, but I wasn't introduced to her myself." Not given to mawkish platitudes, he identifies the reaction to her death as "profound shock," and declares that the fund must become "a worthwhile, splendid part of our culture".

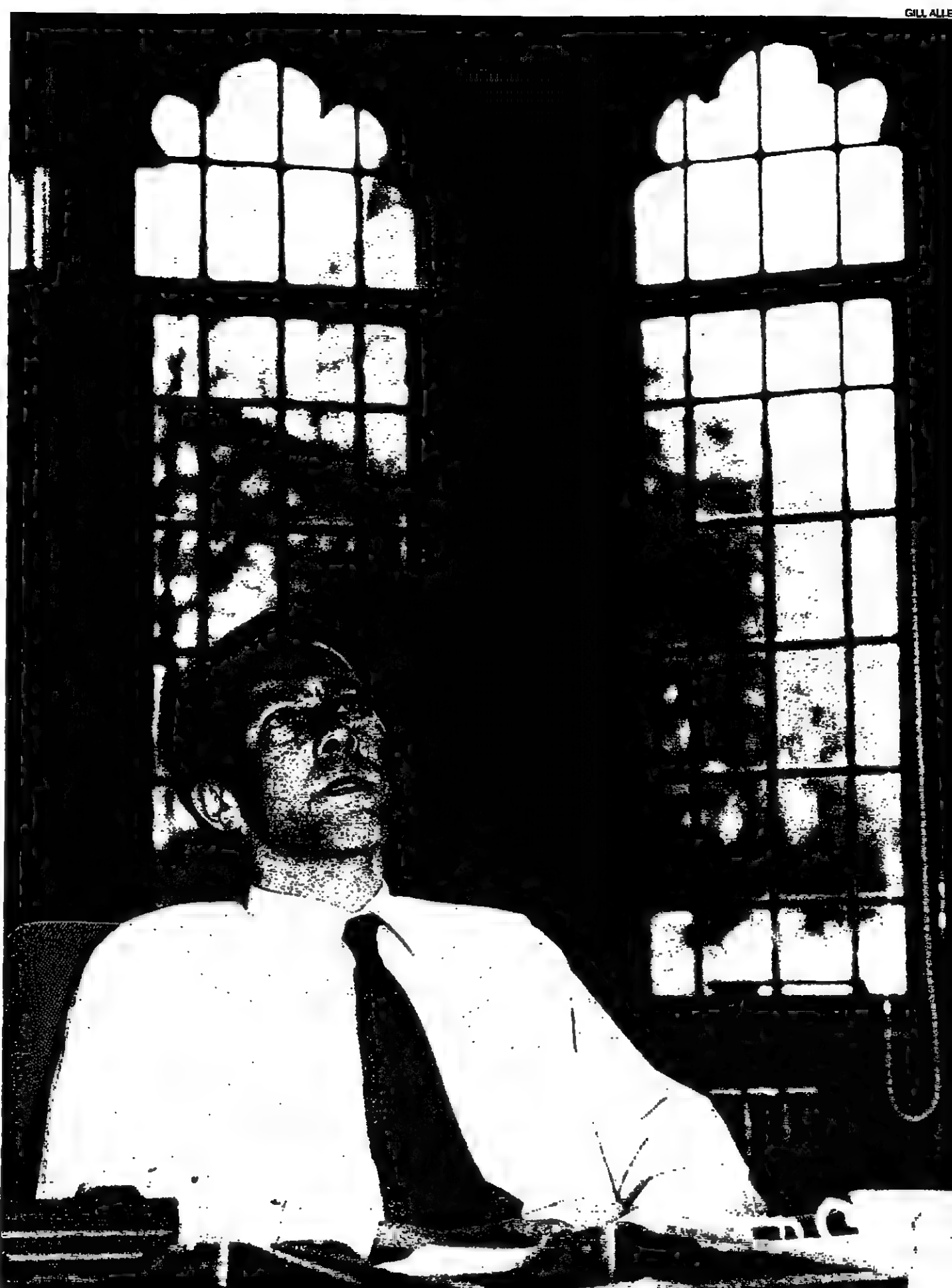
On the day of her death, Lambeth Palace was besieged by requests for the archbishop's views. "He was supposed to be on retreat in the North, but we managed to get him into a television studio in Manchester."

The misleading West-country burr (he pronounces the final "r" in Manchester) comes from 20 years of Cornish holidays: he is going there to-morrow to ride the surf. He was born 49 years ago in North London, the fourth child of an industrial chemist-director of

chemist, director of research with North Thames Gas. One of his three elder sisters is Christine Purkis, author of novels for teenagers. At Highgate School — “the thing I liked most about school was the work” — he became head boy, “but I didn’t like myself” in the role of enforcing petty rules. The only thing I was tough on was silence in the library. I didn’t think it mattered about wearing caps when they were already off Sin. What was liberating was the work, which I really loved.”

He won a scholarship to Corpus Christi, Oxford, where he sang in *The Rake's Progress*, played the fool in college revues and gained a first. Before doing his doctorate, he took a year off as a *Gastarbeiter* among Turks and Yugoslavs in a hellish-sounding glue factory in Munich. "It was pretty ghastly. Huge vats of stinking, thick, industrial glue, and so noisy I could sing *My Love Is Like A Red, Red Rose* at the top of my voice. When one of the vats spilt, I was mobilised with brooms and petrol. I just sang and sang to get through the day. In the evening, I became a bourgeois student in search of opera and cultural life."

He renounced academe for the civil service fast-stream route "because they would take you on even if you didn't know much about anything except railway building in South Africa" (his doctoral thesis).



Dr Purkis at Lambeth Palace: "One person's tat is acceptable to another in a good cause," he said, "but we have to exercise great care"

In the Northern Ireland Office, despite his pipsqueak status, he quickly rose in responsibility under Merlyn Rees. His predecessor as private secretary to the permanent under-secretary had been killed, along with Christopher Ewart-Biggs, Britain's Ambassador in Dublin, in 1976. The job meant flying back and forth between Northolt airport and the Stormont compound, with little time left for any kind of social life.

His record in the voluntary sector was probably instrumental in securing him the new job. As a former assistant director of the

National Council for Voluntary Organisations he created initiatives in community self-help groups such as Waste Watch, which promotes recycling. He was also director of the Council for the Protection for Rural England, under David Puttnam and then Jonathan Dimbleby. Despite his urban background, he is a country-lover who watches birds. Besides, the CPRE is a coalition of town and country, uniting shire colonels and idealistic urban students.

In search of some chink in his impeccably wholesome and worthy armour, I say in jest: "Tell me about

your nightclub croupier wife." He laughs. "Well, no. She is a former nurse and social worker." They have two children, 17 and 15, and live in Balham. Jenny Purkis works part-time in a Wandsworth carers' centre, where people looking after disabled relatives, or parents of mentally handicapped adult children, can seek advice on benefits or respite care – that vast area of need for which the rest of us are thankful there are altruistic volunteers.

"What is really humbling," says Dr Purkis, "is the attitude of people who carry the most extraordinary burdens in their personal lives.

caring for disabled relatives year after year, without complaint or bitterness."

The new job will give him a salary (£75,000) a third more handsome than the archbishop's stipend (£51,020). He had already told the Archbishop that 'since I've only got one life, although I love working here for him, I did intend to keep my eyes open'. When the job of Diana fund chief executive was advertised, for someone with "outstanding management skills and business acumen" he was shortlisted from 19 candidates.

icator, pronounces him a man of "vision and drive".

Life with the archbishop has given him a foretaste of working with someone whose very name can summon public goodwill. "Whenever he asks anybody to do something for him, or to come to Lambeth Palace, they say yes, and it matters so much to all types of people if the archbishop affirms them and takes an interest.

"He prefers to be open with the media, which works better than the Harold Wilson way of thinking the press is all agin you, so you kind of sulk in a defensive way."

He was in such accord with his boss that he was "allowed to play the wet-blanket role when necessary and say 'I don't think that will have the effect you want,' or 'I think such-and-such is a rotten idea.'"

These skills in manipulation and diplomacy will be essential when dealing with over-emotional media obsessiveness about the Princess.

He has told the trustees, who



The Princess compassion

include Sarah McCorquodale, the Princess's sister, that he will spend the first few months preparing a comprehensive vision statement, outlining exactly what the memorial fund is to be. It has already committed £13 million to appropriate causes.

There could be plans to encourage people to bequeath legacies and "beautiful houses" for the use of her charities. "I hope the trustees will not decide that the memorial fund should be a firework, a tremendous show which then fizzles out. I think it should be a living memorial, which will continue in the long term. To blow all the money and then wind it up would be a pity.

"Above all, the fund must have enthusiasm for and commitment to the things the Princess stood for: human warmth and compassion for the weaker people at the margins of society.

"Someone said she shone light into some of the dark and sad places of life, and that is something the fund can continue to do in her name. They needed someone totally committed to that. Then they could accept all the cautious, rigorous judgments that might be necessary."

Caution, rigour, probity: these will be his watchwords. "Yes, it's a high profile fund, so one will have to be quite punctilious about anything that might cause a grubby fuss and might mar what should be a positive effort that rallies goodwill from all sections of society. We don't want to spoil that by having unnecessary controversies and rows."

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Hobgoblins on the hearth

Family life is bruising, it is a wonder that most children manage to survive it at all

Easter is the most popular season for weddings. Each year, the ripening buds of spring join forces with the new tax year to send thousands of young people into life's most testing battle. Hope hurls itself again onto the bruised breast of experience.

In future, the battle rations should include a tape of Monday's Channel 4 documentary, *Keeping it in the Family*, by Roger Graef. I used to think fly-on-the-wall films were mere amateur dramatics. The presence of cameras and the editing process could only distort. What could be filmed obscured what was real. The camera could never draw back from the image to reveal the thought.

I did not think that on Monday night, *Keeping it in the Family* was a documentary about an 11-year-old Wiltshire boy named James. His parents Stewart and Sonia were separated and remarried. Both were unemployed and alcoholic. The child was bright but disturbed, hyperactive and given to rages in which he trashed everything in sight. The father fought the mother for ten years for custody, won it but could not handle the boy, and could not stop hitting him. The mother took him back but could not handle him either. Social workers considered putting James into care.

The characters were desperate in every sense. Drinking, swearing, bearded, pig-tailed, covered in tattoos, they did not work and lived high on the hog of the State. Lacking the diversion and self-esteem of a job, they endured the claustrophobia of nuclear families in council houses, and took it out on each other and their children. They were what middle-class viewers would call "awful people".

The cameras filmed an attempt by the charity, Barnardo's, to get James's extended family together to seek a path for him through their various quarrels, as an alternative to putting him into care. The technique was high-risk. It meant bringing two fractured parties together on neutral territory, and expecting them to sort out their own problems as well as plan James's future — all while James played the fool in their midst.

At first sight the cause was hopeless. The miserable father, Stewart, admitted that he could not restrain himself from hitting his son, who showed his bruises on camera. The boy's behaviour was so bad he could not stay at school. Nobody could manage him. Endearing and articulate though he was, he needed leg-irons and a straitjacket. He was an accident waiting to happen.

The causes of crime are no mystery: one third of imprisoned young offenders spent some time in care. Crime begins with parents who should not have met and children who should not have been born, with love denied, attention scorned, warnings ignored and punishments that merely exacerbate the crime. To this the conservative offers an irrelevant prospectus. Teach these people right from wrong, he cries. Make family break-up harder. Hold parents "responsible" for truancy, crime, drug-taking and curfew. Fine them, says Jack Straw, the Home Secretary. Family values must be inculcated, and if not inculcated then imposed by law. Social workers, psychologists and counsellors are the fancy-goods merchants of progressivism. They are fog, obscuring the shining path leading to the bliss that is the nuclear family.

I would like to see Mr Straw preaching family values to James's relatives. They were beyond values. They were wrestling with an uncontrollable child. It was too late to wonder if he should have been born. Keeping his nuclear family together would have risked life and limb. Punishment was senseless. These were participants not in a tussle between good and evil but in a mess. What was remarkable was that, the more they argued, the less they played fault against fault and the more they attended to the mess.

These people may not look or talk like most Times readers. Yet they plainly loved the boy and saw putting him into care as a failure on their part. They showed what I call responsibility. The father was terrified of his violence and pleaded for counselling. All of them cared about James's grades at school and wanted the best for him. They were not cruel or immoral people, merely untrained, unhelped and incompetent.

Their efforts did not succeed. The relatives managed to agree that James would go back to his mother. But he then tore his mother's family apart and defeat was admitted. He went into care in a foster home and, I understand, is now in a state boarding school in Wiltshire. However, he is reportedly well — behaved and happy. He is no longer at risk from his father. His parents' new families are not being destroyed. Help that, in times past, would have come from a local community must now come from the State. But help has come. The extended family is regrouping, like a regiment forced to retreat but refusing to disband. It wants to keep in touch with the boy, to offer him a better home later.

I cannot think of any cliché of "family values", let alone family policy, relevant to this saga. Tolstoy was wrong. Unhappy families may be unhappy in their own way, but they have a frightening amount in common. Perhaps heavens should be moved to dislodge such people from having children. (I bet both Church and State showered blessings and subsidies to urge Stewart and Sonia into their original union.) What went wrong was not an absence of values or policy. It was that two people found they could not live together or offer security to a child.

I know plenty of parents who do not look or live like these people, yet who share their predicament. They too find a nuclear family hard to sustain. They relieve its pressure by divorce. They ask third parties, relatives or nannies, to act as proxies for their own affection and discipline. Fathers spend little time with sons. Non-working mothers retreat into homes cut off from neighbourly villages or streets, and wonder that they are lonely and unstimulating to their children. I know parents who, like James's, regard boarding school as a respite from the strain of parenthood.

Imposing guilt on those who "re-engineer" their families in this way serves no purpose. The nuclear family is a 20th-century concept. Every Dickens novel involves a family "dysfunctional" in some respect. The much-studied citizens of the medieval village of Montaignou treated family and village as synonymous. What is remarkable is that most children, whose development surely demands an extended society, contrive to survive nuclear families at all.

Being a parent is the toughest job most people attempt. A previous Graef film showed a group of parents trying to handle seriously "hyperactive" children, first at home, then at a special class. Many parents were intelligent and middle-class, yet they made mistakes after mistake. It was like watching someone perform a brain operation or fly a jet without any instruction. We have laws to regulate the nurture of farm animals, the care of the sick or teaching in schools. But bring a child into the world and you are on your own, whether you be harbouring a saint or a serial killer.

Like James's father and mother, you may love your child and ache to be seen as a responsible parent, yet when you foul it up, all the hobgoblins of politics and religion descend on you and call you evil. These people are no help. They can resort to preaching, but they never tell you what to do when you are at your wit's end. But then they, like you, are in this matter still living in the Dark Ages covered in wood.

Simon Jenkins



Hail warriors of peace

John Major celebrates a bravely won accord that will unleash the talents of the Irish people

Let there be no carping. It is a wonderful achievement to have reached an agreement in the North-Ireland talks.

I offer my warmest congratulations to the Prime Minister, the Irish Prime Minister, the party leaders, and also to the Ulster Unionists and Sinn Féin, who had the toughest choices to make. Be in no doubt — it took real courage for the participants in these talks to reach an agreement.

There are countless unknown figures who have played an important part in constructing the mosaic of peace, and if the names of three outstanding civil servants — Stephen Wall, Rod Lyne and John Holmes — appear for once in print, then so much the better. They know how many of their colleagues in Belfast and Dublin also worked so hard and so long for this outcome.

There are many memories. Tom King asking Brian Mahoney to explore talks ten years ago. Later, sitting alone, in Downing Street on my first day as Prime Minister, and writing a shortlist of objectives, with Northern Ireland at its head. The evening that the message arrived at No 10 from the IRA: "We need your [British] help to bring the conflict to an end." Dusk outside, and hope inside.

There were setbacks too, time and time again; and perhaps most dramatically the ending of the ceasefire, and the horror of the atrocities at Warrington and Greysteel. Often it looked hopeless, with entrenched differences seeming to be unbridgeable. But, in truth, it never was hopeless, although doggedness and patience were needed as frequently as inventiveness and optimism.

I remember early meetings with the then Irish Prime Minister, Charles Haughey, when we agreed to meet bilaterally on a regular basis, which was a wholly novel concept.

Albert Reynolds, his successor, engaging and outrageous in turn, but always fun, with whom a pact was formed to seek a deal

we both believed could be done. Out of this was to spring the "Downing Street declaration", which isolated the men of violence and put in place a coalition for peace.

John Bruton, his polar opposite in many ways, was equally fun, and fiercely committed. I had sharp meetings with both of them, but relations never suffered more than a temporary setback. With John Bruton, the framework document was agreed and it set out, for the first time, what a settlement might look like that would be acceptable to both Governments. This document opened the way for the all-party talks that have now reached such a successful conclusion.

Peter Brooke did so much spadework; and Paddy Mayhew was a rock. Always there, always dependable, inventive, dry-witted, and caustic but never letting personal frustrations upset his determination to succeed. He was lucky, too, in Jean Mayhew, who was like a second Secretary of State, so hard did she work in the community. Michael Ancram also had a tremendous "feel" for how to heal the bruises of the past.

The list of builders goes on. Bringing in George Mitchell nearly four years ago. The church leaders, Archbishop Roderic Eames and Cardinal Cahal Daly. There was wise and canny Jim Molyneux and John Hume, whose capacity to produce new propositions never flagged when the old ones fell. So many names, and many more missed than I have mentioned.

But they will not mind, because for all of them it is the outcome that matters.

Clearly, there are still hurdles to overcome. The deal reached by the politicians must be accepted by the Northern Ireland community, where the details may often be unpalatable. The referendum must be won — hopefully by a massive margin.

The legislation has yet to be framed and passed in Westminster and Dublin. The promises made must be honoured. There is a risk — sadly a probability — that some fringe groups may still seek to use terror and mayhem to disrupt the process. Some of those engaged in terrorist activities use it to make a life of criminality under the guise of political aims, and their livelihood is at stake. Massive progress has been made, but much remains to be done, and some will still seek to obstruct it.

The people of Northern Ireland have much to gain. A life without the grisly reality of daily violence, without roadblocks and searches, and without a daily fear for their families and especially their children. The opportunity now exists for a life in which the inherited hatred of generations can be cast aside and the disputes between Catholic and Protestant, Unionist and nationalist, can be consigned to history.

There are more material prospects too. The settlement, if implemented — and perhaps even before it is implemented — will lead to a massive growth in investment in Northern Ireland (and the Republic) on a scale

There is a risk that some fringe groups will still seek to use terror

never seen before, but foreshadowed in the ceasefire of two years ago.

The impact of all this upon practical improvements to the lifestyle of Northern Ireland will be enormous; it will remove grievances and hardship; and there will be jobs in deprived areas (mainly Catholic) where before there were none; a vast improvement in the range and quality of opportunity; huge savings over time (but cautiously, please) on security.

I do not underestimate the problems that lie ahead. They are substantial. Difficult decisions on security, policing, removing weapons, and prisoners in detention will all cause controversy, and in some cases bitterness, as they are finalised and implemented. There will be time enough to reflect on these in the days ahead.

But none of these problems — all of them inevitable and all of them foreseen — can detract from the advances made. The British and Irish Governments are agreed, and eventually and with difficulty, the political parties are agreed, save only the Democratic Unionist Party.

Even in the bleakest moments I always believed it could be done and that the politics of reason would prevail in the end. It now looks as though they might have. A Labour Prime Minister and his Irish counterpart have now orchestrated the agreement. I don't care about their political labels. I just care that they have done it and I want their achievement to thrive.

The Irish people are gifted and joyous. The grim face of terrorism has never been the true face of Ireland. A settlement can unleash all the talents of a people rooted too long in the disputes of their forebears. The present generation may enjoy a future of a sort that was only a dream to their parents.

There is now real cause for hope. Irish history records the Easter Uprising. Let us hope that this Easter records the Irish Settlement.

An eerie flight of faith

Easter makes life bearable, says Nick Cave

It is Easter: the time we remember Jesus Christ and his eerie, enigmatic final days. And there are those of us who find at this time that our feelings of confusion and ambivalence towards Christ's Crucifixion and subsequent Resurrection are intensified. It is a disturbing time of year.

I ring a dear friend I.M. Birwistle, a poet, gallery owner and Roman Catholic, for help and she tells me of Easter and the Passion: "Well, it makes death bearable, dear boy." And I am so struck by the conviction in her voice that I feel pallid and weak with my slippery, etiolated faith.

She speaks of the Resurrection and "the Kingdom that awaits us all" and after wishing her a happy Easter I hang up cursing the part of me that refuses to take that final leap, that leaves me with my ear pressed to the wall of a place where I hear beautiful music but can't find the door that will bid me entrance.

The Passion is the conclusion to a tale that has intrigued me for most of my life. That awesome figure of Christ, whose words of compassion, of venom, of love, of anger, have whispered and howled to me all down my days, has informed my songwriting, calling to my imagination, not just in the jewel-like brilliance of his words, but in the flight of inspiration that was his life. He illuminated the world with his rag-tag ministry, and all the business of his betrayal, his bogus trial and his criminal's death. It is through Christ's life that I have found a focus for my own: in its essential humanness, its mystery, the sadness of it, his hurt for mankind, as He moved towards his inevitable death.

But of course Easter is a celebration of the Resurrection, of that which "makes death bearable". It is a celebration of the promise of a hereafter. And this is where I am left out in the cold. Do we need the Resurrection? Perhaps Christ's extraordinary journey is sufficient justification of life's worth, without the need for all the positive energy to be poured into a concept of the hereafter. Surely this denies us the glory of our existence, demeaning the Kingdom which is here and now?

The Jesus of the Gospels has mythologised life and mystified it. He is a glorious metaphor for our own heroic journey. A man, through virtue of his clarity of vision, propelled Himself and those He touched beyond the mundanity of a life that denies the spark of the divine, of inspiration, of imagination. Christ came in light, to release us from all that would bind us to the ground, in order that we take flight. That Christ moved so indefinably towards his death, blazing a trail of brilliance as He went, yet was so haunted by its approach — as we ourselves are shaped by the approach of our own deaths — only serves to make his own life all the more meaningful. Our lives are meaningful. Death does not negate them. That we die only serves to enlighten our own existences.

For me, the Passion is not so much what makes death bearable, but what makes life bearable.

Nick Cave is a singer, songwriter and author.

Wreck role

CHRIS SMITH is to hire a scuba diver to uncover shipwrecks laden with riches, lying forgotten on the seabed off the British coast. The salty old seadog masquerading as Culture Secretary is to appoint Stuart Bryan, who is to become the Nautical Archaeology Co-ordinator and will join a new Advisory Committee on Historic Wreck Sites. The committee will approve licences to excavate ghostly shipwrecks in the search for a forgotten *Titanic*. Three Roman vessels, said to be submerged under the Thames Estuary for 2,000 years, have excited Smith's interest. The hard-working minister is even considering donning a wetsuit and inspecting the valuable cargo himself. "Mr Bryan is a respected and enthusiastic member of the diving

community and an active member of the Sub-Aqua Association," Smith tells me. "Sport-divers play a key role in the protection of historic wreck sites around our coast."

"These Roman ships are time capsules," says Bryan. "We begin searching in September. It has been suggested that Chris Smith might take a dive although, as an instructor, I must say he will have to meet the physical requirements." A keen conservationist, Bryan does not see himself as a plunderer: "My job is to communicate the value of the objects." Smith will then have to decide whether the wrecks should be salvaged. But if Smith hopes to fill the department's coffers with Roman gold, Bryan fears he might be disappointed. "The boats might just be full of olives."



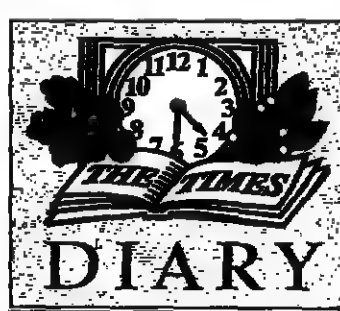
AWAY from the cameras, the early architects of the Irish peace deal will meet this weekend: John Major and Sir Patrick Mayhew. "They will crack open champagne," says a source. "They are hugely relieved and looking forward to toasting the new agreement."

Ronay's recce

THAT old sausage-muncher Egon Ronay has been prowling the Commons to test the quality of MPs' nosh. Attempts by Labour to "northernise" cuisine (black pudding, burnt rissoles, you know the fayre) have not gone down well with the gourmet. But then Ronay has not gone down well with MPs. They were left to nurse rumbling tummies when the head chef at the Churchill Grill closed the kitchen. After an hour's wait, the room — packed with hungry diners — including Ken Clarke, discovered that Ronay was to blame. "The chef is preparing a special meal and wine-tasting for Egon," said a waiter. "Everyone must wait." But Ronay was not impressed when he saw a dodgy potato on the plate of Barry Sheerman, MP. "I don't suppose you are having these," said the MP. "No," replied Ronay. "I will come back disguised as an MP."

Black widow

MADELINE WICKHAM, a Zeitgeist novelist par excellence (you



JASPER GERARD

know the type: thin plot plus an obsession with death and sex, has been invading people's privacy — and grief — to research her latest tome. She has been turning up uninvited to strangers' funerals pos-



ing as a young widow. This macabre pastime has culminated in *The Gatecrasher*, about a young sexy woman who cruises gravesides to prey on rich men to seduce and exploit. As Ms Wickham (pictured) is also young, sexy and exploitative, her imaginative powers could not have been tested too much.

SPORTSWOMEN may have left the Winter Olympics with more than happy memories. A Japanese condom-maker, who handed out samples, is recalling seven million because many have proven defective. "It is Japan's first condom recall," says a health spokesman.

Choral crisis

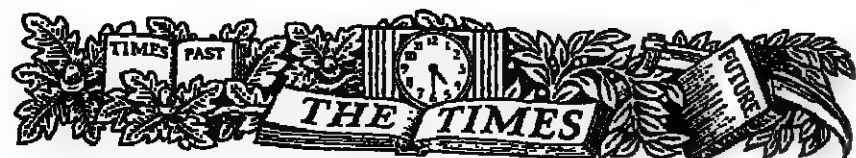
HARVEY GOLDSMITH has fallen foul of Equity over plans to use singers drawn from the public in his mammoth production of *Aida*. The actors' union told its members his quest "to save money" should be opposed. "It is deplorable," it huffs. "Rubbish," says Goldsmith. "Equity did not object initially. Would it have me displace with an excellent choir and replace it with a cobbled-together one?"

THE Archbishop of York's call for a searching review of the links between Church and State rather than the defence of the General Synod. When he called on Thursday to warn them that he was feeling radical, he was greeted by a message: "Closed for Easter."



THE Queen is really getting the hang of "Cool Britannia". After Tony Blair's high-profile Downing Street drinks parties, which backfired rather when some freeloading blighters later took Windsor Castle. HM has decided to hold a bash for creative folk at architecture (modern, not traditional), theatre, film, music, literature and opera are invited to a reception this month. Oblivious to Blair's woes, the Palace wants the bash to "recognise Bonham Carter, Michael Caine, Sebastian Faulks, Dawn French and Sir Tom Stoppard are among the luminaries who have agreed to swig in the castle's newly renovated St George's Hall. But those rebellious types in the rock world have been typically invited," says my man at the Palace. "They have not yet responded." Among them, I hear, the yobbo Oasis. Bad behaviour. No knighthoods, me fears, for the boorish Gallagher brothers.

مكتبة من الأصل



AN EASTER PEACE

Compromise takes root in Ulster's narrow ground

After the longest of Good Fridays has come the best of news. After negotiations which exhausted, but which would not have worked unless they were exhaustive, has come an agreement. After thirty years of tribulation the suffering may cease. This Easter, the congregations who have prayed for peace beneath the steeples of Fermanagh and Tyrone have seen compromise take root in Ulster's narrow ground. It will require careful nurturing and support if it is not to be trodden underfoot by militants. But the integrity of the quarrel between Unionist and nationalist of which Winston Churchill spoke in 1922 may, at last, have been resolved. Two hundred years after Irishmen united in rebellion they may, at last, be brought together in honest reconciliation.

The agreement in Ulster is the work of many hands, some stained by past misdeeds, but all now clasped in hope. It is too soon, perhaps, to fashion laurels from the olive branches of peace but Tony Blair has shown himself as skilled a statesman as he is a party leader. This week he has used both silk and steel to bring disputants together. D.G. Boyce, the distinguished historian of Ireland's troubles, has said before that the Irish Question can be answered only by London's politicians. Mr Blair, in partnership with the Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, has used all the authority of his office to bring a settlement and in so doing to work towards a secure future for the United Kingdom.

All those of Northern Ireland's politicians who have assented to this settlement have taken risks, and many must show great bravery if it is to stick. The Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble, in particular, has shown rare vision. Every step towards a settlement was haunted by the memory of the men who had stumbled before. Terence O'Neill and Brian Faulkner had led Unionism from the front but travelled too far from their people. By honestly reflecting his constituents' fears, while also educating them in the changing realities of a new political environment, Mr Trimble has made a more durable and more modern Union possible.

The last-minute alarms which delayed

but did not derail agreement may have irritated, but Mr Trimble had to safeguard the principles on which a lasting and honourable peace must be built. All who participate in a new Northern Ireland assembly must demonstrate an unambiguous commitment to democracy. The de-commissioning of weapons is a precondition which must be adhered to before parties can work together. It has been waived during negotiations in order to ensure that no movement can feel victimised, but now the path is clear for the paramilitaries. Abandoning the Armalite will allow them to wield the levers of power. Their electorate's voice can be properly heard only when the guns are, for ever, silenced.

Nationalist Ireland will also have to accept the de-commissioning of old symbols, but it stands to gain much of substance. With the agreement enshrining the principle of consent in the Constitution of the Irish Republic, the point is conceded that Ulster's future is firmly within the United Kingdom for as long as its citizens wish. But now nationalists within Northern Ireland have the chance to play their full, and equal, part in the administration of the Province. The structure of a future assembly guarantees that majorities can never grow arrogant, while also ensuring that the assent of a majority is required for the effective operation of new North-South institutions. The space has been cleared for the genuine co-operation between Belfast and Dublin which can benefit all the island's citizens without needing to threaten the identity of any.

This Easter agreement will not bring peace within days. Indeed, it may be accompanied at first by an upsurge of violence from those groups on the fringes determined never to compromise. If, however, the republican leadership can show the courage to say the struggle has ended and if, above all, this agreement is seen as a settlement and not a staging-post, then there is hope. Future Easters may then be celebrated in all the Province's churches with signs of peace across old barriers, bells which no longer toll mournfully and hearts that can sing joyfully.

STANDARDS OF TRUTH

Scientists do not believe Iraqi lies and nor should diplomats

UN weapons inspectors have been back at work in Iraq for only a few weeks. It is too soon to judge whether last February's deal between the Iraqi Government and Kofi Annan has enabled Unscorn's experts to resume their vital work free of Iraqi obstruction, or whether Iraq will succeed in placing its teams under unworkable political constraints. The first inspection of the eight "presidential sites" was inevitably a formality: Iraq had had weeks in which to remove all documents and suspect equipment. The palaces had even been stripped of furniture.

But this was a sideshow. More relevant to the task at hand was last month's statement by Richard Butler, the head of Unscorn, that he had made "great progress" in talks with Tariq Aziz, Iraq's Deputy Premier, and found "a new spirit of co-operation". But Iraq continues to try to hobble Unscorn; and the new spirit does not seem to have operated during the latest technical evaluation of Iraq's biological weapons programme by a team of independent experts in Vienna.

This independent review was undertaken at the request of Iraq, which clearly hoped that it would be more positive than Unscorn about Iraq's compliance with its obligation to eliminate its biological, chemical and nuclear weapons capability. For more than a week, Iraqi officials discussed Iraq's latest "full, final and complete disclosure" of its biological weapons programme with experts from 15 countries. Only three Unscorn members were present.

The resulting report is damning. It speaks of "falsified or altered papers, accounts and material", of "incomplete and inadequate" disclosures, of "inconsistencies and gaps in

information" and "implausible" and "absurd" accounting for such deadly materials as botulinum, anthrax and aflatoxin. It concludes that Iraq is probably still hiding weapons, stocks, large quantities of growth media for cultivating deadly bacteria and bombs designed to deliver lethal agents.

The experts' criticisms cover not only the disclosure document produced last September but the attitude of the Iraqi officials at the meeting itself. The delegation, it says, "did not grasp the opportunity offered" to provide the information sought. Its attitude showed "no change since 1995", a period when, Iraq later admitted, it was doing everything to hide its biological weapons programme. So much for the new spirit of co-operation. A convincing Iraqi account of purchases, stocks and capabilities is as important as the UN's unfettered access to sites in Iraq. The next six-monthly assessment of Iraq's compliance is due within days. This report, together with the International Atomic Energy Agency's negative assessment on Iraq's nuclear programme, should put any further easing of UN sanctions out of the question.

Those whose concerns are not commercial advantage but humanitarian need should also note that Iraq's Government shares that proper concern so little that it is trying to sabotage the conference Britain is convening to help Iraq to sell more oil for food. These reports are encouraging evidence that last February's deal has in no way diminished the determination of scientific experts not to be fobbed off with Iraqi evasions. Diplomats prepared to tolerate a fudge have been set standards of truth that they must respect.

BURSTING BANKS HOLIDAY

The Great British Disaster breaks all records

As any meteorologist will forecast, the collision of two fronts usually results in a deluge. And all Britain has suffered the consequences this holiday weekend. One unstoppable front, advancing steadily along the M40 in a band across the Midlands, was the unusually dense mass of cars generated by that seasonal phenomenon, Bank Holiday. The other front was the spirit of Dunkirk, normally not seen in Britain except during freak conditions, which can rapidly precipitate memories of the Blitz and flasks of warm tea whenever it meets natural or even self-induced adversity. The resulting thunderclaps can be heard all over television and leave newspapers streaked with columns of grainy pictures, heartbreaking clichés and touching stories of dogs, cats and grannies being rescued from inundation.

No Bank Holiday is complete without the word "chaos" appended to its description. Normally tests of endurance are inflicted by vicious outside forces: striking Spanish air controllers, French lorry drivers blockading the Channel ports or Brussels bureaucrats banning the Great British Holiday Break-fast. Such spoilsports seem intent on wrecking the ancient family custom of packing babies, biscuits and bickering into Ford Fiesta and enjoying the lorry fumes on the M25 and reminiscences of horror jams of

the past from others on the hard shoulder. The week at Magaluf would hardly seem merited if it was not preceded by taped messages every three hours at Gatwick promising a new take-off time.

Britons are natural passengers on the Titanic, comforting each other with tales of disaster as the countryside disappears under water. All last week the weathermen, with just a touch of gloating, were predicting sleet, snow, hail and storms. But Middle England did not listen. Middle England knows that tornadoes happen only in disaster movies. But now disaster has fallen on Middle England, and no scenario is too awful to contemplate. Riverbanks are bursting, bridges buckling, rescue helicopters whirling aloft. Even mobile phone systems have been swamped as car after car gleefully flashes out the bad news.

Motoring organisations, rescue workers and the hapless housewife can give satisfying vent to their plight: "It was a journey from hell. I've never seen anything like it." Even the unlucky ones who stay dry at home can thrill to the shots of water pouring into others' sitting rooms. Satisfyingly, officials have proclaimed that in many places it has been the worst flood this century. And for years to come the hardy can relate how they survived the famous Easter of 1998.

Cost to industry of high interest rates

From Mr Michael Fabricant, MP for Lichfield (Conservative)

Sir, So Eddie George has managed to prevent an interest rate rise for another month (report, Business, April 10). He is to be congratulated in his impossible position. Both the Bank and the Government recognise that the high value of the pound is crippling manufacturing industry. Yet when questioned on the matter, the Prime Minister and Chancellor proclaim their innocence and their inability to intervene. In the Commons on Wednesday (Political Sketch, April 9), John Prescott tried to make light of it.

Labour are right to claim they are powerless in this. During the election campaign they promised not to increase income taxes during the course of the Parliament — and who can blame them? Labour do not enjoy a good reputation on that front. But by making that commitment, they painted themselves into an economic corner. Once in Government, Labour then took an early and blatant political decision which compounded their fix and has proved near-fatal for exporters.

The Chancellor gave quasi-independence to the Bank of England: a halfway house which he hoped would deflect blame for interest rate rises away from the Treasury. This was a decision he will live to regret. For unlike the US Federal Reserve, which has full independence and can set its own strategic inflation targets for the long-term benefit of the US economy, the Government has set the Bank of England the rigid target of a 2.5 per cent inflation rate, at a time when continental European and US rates are drifting slightly upwards. What choice did Eddie George have but to show caution and raise interest rates five times since the election?

The Chancellor should have either retained the powers enjoyed by his predecessor, Ken Clarke, or allowed the Bank total independence. Instead, interest rates are set too high and are likely to rise again. Combined with the perceived weakness of the euro-currencies and our economy's tendency to be more in phase with that of the US, the pound is likely to shackle exporters still further in the months to come.

Yours faithfully,
MICHAEL FABRICANT,
House of Commons,
April 10.

From Mr Michael J. Forbes

Sir, It is clear that the Bank of England will continue to use high interest rates to prevent the economy overheating. However, since such measures are indirect, there is an inevitable delay in achieving the reduction in consumer spending. In the meantime, irreparable damage will be done to certain parts of our manufacturing sector.

A more direct and selective method of controlling consumer spending would result from the Treasury increasing VAT rates for a limited period. In reality, VAT is a tax on consumption.

While the Government stated at the time of the election that they had no intention of raising taxes, they will not be the first administration to undertake a U-turn, no doubt blaming the previous Government.

Yours faithfully,
MICHAEL J. FORBES,
63 Hough Green, Chester CH4 8JW,
April 10.

Jonesboro tragedy

From Mr John Hopewell

Sir, Mr Tim Bone (letter, April 6) describes our strongest support in his appeal for a better understanding of the causes of the tragedy in Jonesboro, Arkansas.

I thought his argument became a little clouded in its reference to the culture of oppression and heterosexual male domination, but his conclusion is absolutely right: our society has devised no way of propagating a code of personal conduct to take the place of Church, family and school, which for various reasons are less and less effective in this role.

His letter draws attention to a neglected subject, but one which deserves society's first consideration.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN HOPEWELL,
The Vicarage, Langrish,
Petersfield, Hampshire GU32 1QY.
jhm53@btinternet.com
April 6.

Life's little burdens

From Dr C. Whetton

Sir, Dr Thomas Staufford may be concerned about "telephone neck" (article, April 2) and Mrs Sandra Chidwick (letter, April 7) may be suffering from "handbag hunch", but I was recently diagnosed as suffering from "laptop shoulder".

This condition is apparently caused by carrying a notebook computer, mobile phone, tape recorder, camera, spare batteries, tapes, film and discs for the above — along with a large flask of malt whisky and a bottle of Codeine.

Yours faithfully,
CRIS WHETTON,
Salakampankatu 40B18,
33220 Tampere, Finland.
cwhetton@vt.fi
April 7.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Television's 'dynamic' digital future

From Mr David Graham

Sir, Raymond Snoddy reports (April 7) on Mr Rupert Murdoch's speech to the European Audiovisual Conference on the "unhealthy concentration" of power that he perceives in state broadcasting.

As we enter a world of many channels, I believe we should be less concerned about broadcaster concentration and more concerned about creative concentration.

What will matter most is that channels are managed in a way likely to create the best content. That in turn suggests that our regulators should shift their attention to issues like competition, diversity of supply, and ease of entry for the makers of content.

In the UK, in 1996, nearly 44 per cent of the audiences for new terrestrial network programmes were for programmes made by one producer: BBC Television. Granada came next at 11 per cent (15 per cent if subsequent acquisitions are included). I am currently looking at the figures for 1997, but I do not expect very much change. This is a level of creative concentration unprecedented anywhere else in the world.

It would be surprising if the conditions that produce the best results in other fields do not apply equally to the production of television programmes. If we want our entertainment industries to be dynamic, exporting industries, our programmes need to be as good as we can possibly make them. And that will mean reaping the full benefits of competition.

Yours sincerely,
DAVID GRAHAM,
David Graham & Associates Limited,
33-39 Bridge Street,
Taunton, Somerset TA1 1TP,
April 7.

From Mr Horace Mitchell

Sir, Many will agree with Mr John Birt's appeal for continued protection of public service broadcasting in the digital age (report, April 6). But let's hope that his plans for the BBC's ventures into digital services are not based on his erroneous assertion that "The cost of watching a screen will rise enormously".

Coward revival

From the Director of The Red Hot Aids Charitable Trust

Sir, To survive as a standard, a song has to be able to stand up to many different interpretations and styles of performance. It is a cruel paradox that Sir Noël Coward's recordings of his own songs have indeed proved to be inimitable, to the extent that very few have subsequently been performed by other artists. The reputation of his songs has thus sadly been the victim of the success, in his lifetime, of Coward's own performances of them.

Clive Davis ("Echoes of the Master's voice", Arts, April 9) fails to recognise that few people under 50 today could name, or recognise, any of Coward's songs. If one believes that Coward was indeed a great songwriter, one has to accept that his songs need to reach new audiences. Excessive reverence or pastiche are unlikely to convince new audiences of their lasting worth.

All the more reason to welcome a fresh, contemporary approach to Coward's unique legacy, as exemplified in the performances of Robbie Williams, Elton John, and all the other artists involved in the *Twentieth Century Blues* project, of which I am happy to have been the originator.

Yours sincerely,
SIMON WATNEY, Director,
The Red Hot Aids Charitable Trust,
Suite 32, The Eurolink Centre,
49 Effra Road, Brixton, SW2 1BZ,
April 9.

Cheers

From Sir Humphry Wakefield

Sir, Hemingway readers may well recall his *mainly Martini* (SI mix letter, April 7). Noël Coward's was more mainly still.

I was lucky enough to stay in the Master's New York apartment for a few months long ago and his Martini directions were very clear: Chill the gin and shake it, lemon peel routine, incline towards Italy and serve.

Yours &c,
HUMPHRY WAKEFIELD,
Chillingham Castle,
Chillingham,
Northumberland NE66 5NJ,
April 7.

Slips of the tongue

From Mr E. A. J. Parry

Sir, Your report (March 31) about the film *The Man in the Iron Mask* points out that the mask of the prisoner in the Bastille was made of velvet, not iron.

I am reminded of a literary mis-translation in the story of Cinderella who, we are told in the English version, went to the ball and dropped her glass slipper on the palace stairs. In this case the translator of the original French text confused the word *vair* (fur or ermine) with its homophone

verre (glass). Certainly Cinderella would have been much more comfortable in fur.

It seems possible that in Dumas' story there may somehow have been a confusion between *vair* and *fer* (iron). While not exact homophones they are close enough in pronunciation for a misunderstanding.

Yours,
E. A. J. PARRY,
Hobland House,
Devon House Drive,
Bovey Tracey,
South Devon TQ13 9HA,
April 4.

Yours faithfully,
OLIVER IMPEY,
Department of Eastern Art,
Ashmolean Museum,
Oxford OX1 2PH,
April 7.

Blight of malaria and its treatments

From Dr Ruth Livingstone

Sir, I read with sympathy and interest the account by Matthew Parris ("I think I'd rather have malaria", Weekend, April 4) of the very unpleasant symptoms he experienced after taking Lariam, the anti-malaria drug.

Unfortunately, I gather from his article that he did not report his symptoms to his GP before departure, which could have averted some of his distress as his GP would probably have advised switching to an alternative drug. In addition, he apparently failed to report his symptoms upon return.

This means that doctors here were unable to learn from his experience, and his GP was unable to report these serious complications using the "yellow card" system, ie, reporting unusual or serious complications to the Committee on Safety of Medicines. It appears Mr Parris has little faith in doctors ("I don't think they know very much"), and GPs in particular, but to blame the profession for his predicament without having sought appropriate advice when adverse symptoms developed seems a little unjust.

Yours faithfully,
RUTH LIVINGSTONE,
The Little Surgery,
St Mary's Street,
Stamford, Lincolnshire PE9 2DG,
ruth.livingstone@ukonline.co.uk
April 4.

From Mr Toby Heelis

Sir, Working for the last three years in the safari industry of Zimbabwe and Zambia, I found that not many days went by without a client bringing up the topic of malaria.

Most British clients had been issued with the easy but expensive drug Lariam. Having seen many holidays spoiled from its side-effects I advised people not to continue their course if any showed. If they were travelling for an extended period then I advised them to use Deltaprim, which is taken orally once a week and is cheap.

Most people in the industry had their own methods of dealing with malaria, with a large proportion not using any preventive but dealing with the disease quickly if they caught it. I did not take anything for two years and avoided the disease until last year, when a 12-hour course of a drug called Halfan knocked it on the head within a day. Since then I have caught it twice more, the last time more seriously with a temperature of 105°C. I had to take quinine for two weeks.

My advice now to any traveller going to a malaria zone is to avoid Lariam and to try to get hold of the locally used drug: also to carry a couple of doses of one of the courses of cures available, as catching and treating it early should prevent long-term suffering.

Malaria is a nasty disease but with a little knowledge and preparation it should not spoil your travels. I am now in London trying to get treatment for Bilharzia which I picked up in Malawi, but that is another story altogether.

Yours etc,
TOBY HEELIS,
Shaw Heelis,
Melbourne, Derbyshire DE73 1DJ,
tobyheelis@compuserve.com
April 6.

From Dr Stuart Sanders

Sir, Matthew Parris says he "lacks confidence in" GPs and I must rise to the defence of my peers.

It is ridiculous that he would "go straight to the specialist" — the cheek of it! How would Mr Parris ever know if the condition from which he was suffering was malaria, influenza or even something worse? If everyone who had a fever ran to the Hospital for Tropical Diseases it would very quickly be overwhelmed and grind to a halt.

Doctors may "not know very much", but we do know enough to prevent impatient patients such as Mr Parris from wasting specialists' time.

Yours faithfully,
STUART SANDERS,
22 Harcourt House,
20 Harley Street, W1N 1AL,
dsanders@btinternet.com
April 4.

From Dr Richard Dawood

Sir, The mosquito with which you illustrated Matthew Parris's article is not *Anopheles*, the vector of malaria, but *Aedes aegypti*, with its characteristic hunched back and smart black-and-white trim. *Aedes* spreads dengue and yellow fever and, on reflection, I too would rather have malaria.

Yours sincerely,
RICHARD DAWOOD,
29 Fleet Street, EC4Y 1AA,
richard@aradco.com
April 4.

From Mr Howard G. Woodall

Sir, I was concerned to see the large photo of the semi-naked Matthew Parris accompanying his piece on malaria. I hope your other commentators restrain themselves; or are we to see Peter Riddell, Simon Jenkins and Lord Rees-Mogg as nature made them?

This sort of thing should be nipped in the bud.

Yours sincerely,
HOWARD G. WOODALL,
95 Erlanger Road, SE14 5TQ,
April 6.

Letters should carry a daytime telephone number. They may be faxed to 0171-782-5046. e-mail to: letters@the-times.co.uk

SOCIAL
NEWS

The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh will launch the change to the use of liquid petroleum gas in Royal Cars at the Royal Mews, Buckingham Palace, on May 7.

Weekend
birthdays

TODAY: Miss Janet Allen, former Headmistress, Benenden School, 62; Viscount Buckmaster, 77; Mr Joseph Burnett-Stuart, former chairman, Robert Fleming Holdings, 68; Sir Raymond Carr, former Warden, St Antony's College, Oxford, 79; Mr Gervase de Peyer, clarinetist, 72; Sir Oscar de Ville, former chairman, Meyer International, 73; Mr Clive Exton, scriptwriter and playwright, 68; Mr James Alan Fernan, director, British Board of Film Classification, 68; Mr Michael Hindley, MEP, 51; Dr R.J.B. Knight, deputy director, National Maritime Museum, 54; Dame Anne Poole, former chief nursing officer, Department of Health, 64; the Earl of Sandwich, 55; Mr Richard Wainwright, former MP, 60; Professor Michael Wright, Vice-Chancellor, Aston University, 51.

TOMORROW: Sir Alan Ayckbourn, playwright, 59; Mr Bill Bryden, theatre director, 56; Miss Montserrat Caballé, opera singer, 65; Mr Brian Connolly, writer and broadcaster, 82; Miss Elspeth Gray (Lady Rix), actress, 69; Mr H.R. Hewitt, former chairman, Johnson Matthey, 78; the Right Rev John T. Hughes, former Bishop of the Forces, 90; Mr Uwe Kitzinger, former President, Templeton College, Oxford, 70; the Earl of Limerick, 68; Mr A.W. Mabbis, archivist, 77; Mr Bryan Magee, writer, 68; Air Marshal Sir Harold Maguire, 86; Mr E.C. Meade, chartered accountant, 75; Dr Hilary Nicolle, educationist, 53; Mr George Robertson, Secretary of State for Defence, 52; Mrs Wendy Savage, obstetrician and gynaecologist, 63.

Forthcoming
marriages

Mr T.G.T. Barnett and Miss A.N. Eccles
The engagement is announced between Timothy, eldest son of Dr and Mrs Colin Barnett, of Boulder, Colorado, USA, and Amy, only daughter of Mr Ronald Parsons, of East Lansing, Michigan, and of Dr Jacquelynne Eccles, of Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA.

Dr S.M.A. Bays and Miss C.S. Aiken
The engagement is announced between Simon, son of Vikki and Howard Bays, of Lee Manor, Romsey, and Sarah, eldest daughter of Nigel and Janet Aiken, of Broadley Villa, Marshfield, Wiltshire.

Mr M.A.J. Burgess and Dr E.L. Barker
The engagement is announced between Mark, son of Mr and Mrs Peter Burgess, of Cirencester, Gloucestershire, and Emma, daughter of Mr and Mrs Russell Barker, of Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire.

Mr J.F.G. Hamersley and Miss C.N. Perez
The engagement is announced between John Franklin, only son of Mr and Mrs John Hamersley, of Worfield, Shropshire, and Christina, only daughter of Mr and Mrs Charles Perez, of Bickley, Kent and Sri Lanka.

Mr A. Hayfield and Miss C.F. Farrar
The engagement is announced between Gareth, son of Mr Patrick Jones, of Willenhall, West Midlands, and Nicky, daughter of Air Vice-Marshal and Mrs Brian Farrar, of Stanmore, Middlesex.

Mr C.J. Scudde and Miss P.J.M. Young
The engagement is announced between Christopher, son of Mr and Mrs Peter Scudde, of Bucklebury, Berkshire, and Philippa, daughter of Mr and Mrs John Young, of Castlewing, Isle of Man.

Mr G.J. Short and Miss B.D. Seodden
The engagement is announced between Geoffrey James, younger son of Mr and Mrs L. Short, of Gernon, New South Wales, Australia, and Brynna Deborah, younger daughter of Mr and Mrs G. Seodden, of Ventnor, Isle of Wight.

Mr J.D. West and Miss G. McInerney
The engagement is announced between James, son of Mr and Mrs David West, of Wimbledon, and Gillian, daughter of Mr and Dr McInerney, of Oxford.



Matthew Eltringham and Sally Goodman, of London SW3, who have recently announced their engagement

Latest wills

Lawrence Lee Baumann, of West Chillingworth, West Sussex, left estate valued at £864,045 net.

Marjorie Hensley Belgrave, of Sherbourne, Warwick, left estate valued at £799,928 net. She left £250 each to the PDSA, and to the National Cancer Research Fund, £200 to Claverdon Parish Church.

Mila Patricia Cooper, of Aislaby, Pickering, North Yorkshire, left estate valued at £570,928 net. William Laurie Hewson, of Sheffield, left estate valued at £812,176 net.

Vere Saville Kinsey, of Addington, Wiltshire, left estate valued at £730,940 net.

Mary Lorraine Leigh-Coop, of Worthing, West Sussex, left estate valued at £499,582 net.

Bridget Mary Robertson, of Broadway, Worcestershire, left estate valued at £903,686 net. She left £200 each to the PDSA, and to the National Cancer Research Fund, £200 to Claverdon Parish Church.

Greta Emilia Olga Anna Singer, of Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, left estate valued at £595,453 net.

David Jonathan Smith, of Carleton Green, Pontefract, West Yorkshire, left estate valued at £518,879 net.

Jean Stanley, of Lotherdale, North Yorkshire, left estate valued at £601,669 net.

Richard Edward Wheatcroft, of Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, left estate valued at £404,067 net.

William Laurie Hewson, of Sheffield, left estate valued at £812,176 net.

Anniversaries

TODAY BIRTHS: Sir John Eliot, parliamentarian, St Germans, Cornwall, 1922; George Carling, Prime Minister 1827, London, 1770; Sir Charles Hallé, pianist, conductor and founder of the orchestra that bears his name, Hagen, Germany, 1819.

DEATHS: Llywelyn ap Iorwerth, Prince of Wales, Aberconwy, 1240; Sir Gerald du Maurier, actor-manager, London, 1934; Sir Archibald McIndoe, plastic surgeon, London, 1960; Josephine Baker, singer, Paris, 1975; Enver Hoxha, Albanian leader 1944-85, Albania, 1985.

The Coronation took place of King William III and Queen Mary II, 1689.

France ceded Gibraltar to England in the Treaty of Utrecht, 1713.

Napoleon abdicated and was banished to Elba, 1814.

The Germans blitzed Coventry, 1941.

TOMORROW BIRTHS: Giuseppe Tartini, composer, Istria, 1692; John George Lambton, 1st Earl of Durham, statesman, London, 1792; Alexander Ostrovsky, dramatist, Moscow, 1823.

DEATHS: Boris Godunov, Tsar of Russia 1598-1605, Moscow, 1605; William Kent, architect and landscape gardener, London, 1748; Charles Burney, music historian and composer, London, 1814; Charles-Joseph Messier, astronomer, Paris, 1817; Feodor Chaliapin, bass singer and actor, Paris, 1938; Franklin D. Roosevelt, 32nd American President 1933-45, Warm Springs, Georgia, 1945; Joe Louis, the "Brown Bomber", world heavyweight boxing champion 1937-48, Las Vegas, 1981; Alan Stewart Paton, writer, Durban, 1988; Sugar Ray Robinson, boxer, Culver City, California, 1989.

The American Civil War began with the siege of Fort Sumter, South Carolina, 1861.

Vice-President Harry S. Truman succeeded Roosevelt as American President, 1945.

Yuri Gagarin of the Soviet Union made the first successful flight into space in Vostok 1, 1961.

The Leverhulme
Trust

The Leverhulme Trustees have agreed to award the following grants to institutions:

Research: Economics, business studies, industrial relations
Manchester Metropolitan University, Dr A. Alexander, Wolverhampton University, Professor J. Benson, Localisation of British Multiples, £50,000 over three years.

National Institute of Economic and Social Research
Graduate utilisation in service industries, £42,600 over 1.25 years.

University of Strathclyde
Professor A. Hughes, The co-ordination of fiscal and monetary policy under the stability pact, £12,240 over six months.

Research: Law, politics, international relations
University College London, Mr R. Hassell, The role of second chambers of Parliament overseas: a comparative study, £46,180 over 12 months.

Research: Social sciences (incl. anthropology, geography, social psychology)
London School of Economics, Professor H. L. Moore, Gender and symbolism: new theoretical approaches, £50,480 over two years.

Research: Basic sciences
Plymouth University, Professor M. Depledge, Dr A. S. Clara, The influence of environmental xenotransplantation on parasitism in crustaceans, £55,320 over 3 years.

Research: Basic sciences
Leeds University, Dr J. E. Smith, Dr A. Dunn, Molecular physiology of transmembrane transport: microsporidian parasites, £45,950 over two years.

Research: Basic sciences
Bristol University, Professor A. K. Shabazz, Role of translocation in regulating triglyceride quality in oil seeds, £94,490 over three years.

Research: Basic sciences
UMIST, Dr T. A. Brown, Genetic diversity of wild and cultivated wheats, £10,340 over three years.

Research: Basic sciences
Sheffield University, Dr N. J. C. Spooner, Cocktails of alkali halide scattering particles: the CASPAR mechanism, £55,230 over two years.

Research: Basic sciences
Newcastle upon Tyne University, Professor C. P. Baraghi, Dr D. C. Samuels, Vortex coupled turbulence, £21,000 over 12 months.

in liquid helium, £60,640 over 3 years.

Warwick University, Dr T. Dreveth, Laser-induced fluorescence, £55,000 over three years.

Heriot-Watt University, Professor K. J. Roberts, Examination of organic crystal surfaces/interfaces via NEXAFS spectroscopy, £44,880 over two years.

Dyson Perrins Laboratory, Oxford University, Dr D. M. Hodgson, Development of entomological cyclodextrin chemistry, £80,500 over three years.

Department of Chemistry, Cambridge University, Dr S. Balasubramanian, Dr D. Kiennerman, Fulfilling chemist's ultimate dream - performing experiments on single molecules, £55,960 over 3 years.

Edinburgh University, Dr S. E. McCallie, Lancaster University, Dr P. Barker, Environmental impacts of sulphate deposition in tropical lake systems (Mexico), £88,700 over two years.

Reading University, Dr P. Valdes, Professor B. Sellwood, An investigation of the hot-house to hot-house climatic transition, £55,290 over three years.

Reading University, Professor K. P. Pye, Effects of changes in wave climate & sea level on coastal erosion, £10,020 over three years.

Newcastle upon Tyne University, Dr A. Brandenburg, Dr A. Shukurov, Magnetohydrodynamic astrophysical jets in three dimensions, £97,190 over three years.

University College London, Professor D. M. Hunt, Professor J. K. Bowman, Sequence & functional analysis of open genes in the genome, £52,520 over three years.

Research: Applied sciences (including architecture)

Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine, Dr J. R. Durran, Professor P. O'Brien, The fabrication of functional nanocrystalline TiO2 films, £70,000 over two years.

Canfield University, Dr I. K. Partridge, Modelling cure in thermosets: is there an easier way? £19,140 over 12 months.

Bristol University, Dr J. Memmo, The impact of biocatalysis on natural communities, £53,470 over three years.

Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, Dr T. Pennington, Historical biogeography of South American vascular plants, £101,130 over 3 years.

Research: Humanities

Leeds University, Professor J. Coon, Strategy & security: the armed forces & Italian foreign policy, 1922-1940, £55,230 over two years.

Reading University, Dr C. Duigan, Francesco Crispi - a political biography, £21,000 over 12 months.

Portsmouth University, Dr J. Mohan, Dr M. Powell, The historical geography of the voluntary hospital system in Britain, 1890-1947, £27,120 over 12 months.

Newcastle upon Tyne University, Professor D. E. Minnikin, Dr G. D. Adams, Biomarkers for ancient environmental - biomarkers for ancient poverty, £117,280 over 3 years.

British School at Rome, Dr H. L. Patterson, The Tiber & Rome: the regional impact of the city through two millennia, £49,110 over 3 years.

Birmingham University, Dr J. P. Sadler, Institute of Archaeology, University of London, Dr G. Hillman, The history & impact of insect pests of stored products from ancient Egypt, £169,180 over three years.

Birmingham University, Professor J. Haldon, Professor F. M. Young, Study & edition of unpublished homilies attributed to St Basil the Great, £21,500 over three years.

Aberdeen University, Professor G. S. Rousseau, Cultural consumption, cholera, nostalgia, £75,600 over three years.

Education: fine arts

Aberdeen University, Ms E. Webb, Short ensemble course '88-90 including strings, brass, wood, baroque, £20,130 over three years.

Royal Scottish Academy of Music, Dr P. Ledger, Masterclasses for singers & instrumentalists, £90,000 over three years.

Total grants: £3,156,300

AIRBUS TO GO AHEAD
WITHOUT BRITAIN

France and West Germany told the British Government yesterday that they were going ahead with the building of a 250-seat European Airbus without Britain as a partner.

A meeting in London between Mr Wedgwood Benn, Minister of Technology, and French and West German Ministers, agreed that the door should be left open in case Britain wants to come in later, but the feeling in aviation circles last night was that British participation in the project is now dead.

Britain's one-third share of research and development costs is £62 m. Full British withdrawal would come as a heavy blow for the British aircraft industry.

CONCORDE 002 SOARS
OVER SETBACKS

[Two days earlier] the British-built Concorde prototype 002 super-sonic airliner made a successful 22-minute maiden flight from Filton, near Bristol.

"It was wizard - a cool, calm and collected operation," Mr Brian Trubshaw, the British Aircraft Corporation's chief test pilot, said after landing the 110-ton aircraft at RAF Fairford, Gloucestershire.

It was a triumph over setbacks. At the beginning of the runway the re-heat system in the engine failed to work. Later, when the Concorde was coming in to land, the radio altimeters failed and Mr Trubshaw himself had to judge the aircraft's height.

Mr Trubshaw made a split-second decision to take the British-assembled Concorde 002 super-sonic airliner off the runway at Filton and into his maiden flight.

The plan was that the Concorde should make a last taxi on the airfield. If everything went well, Mr Trubshaw would make the first flight. Everything did go well and as the 110-ton aircraft raced down the runway at more than 120 mph, its nosewheel cleared the ground, he made his decision.

ON THIS DAY

April 11, 1969

April 1969 was an important month for British aviation. On April 11 the Times reported that the Concorde was taking its maiden flight.

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"It all looks good," he told Mr John Cochrane, his co-pilot, so, instead of braking the Concorde to a halt, he pulled back on the control column and soared up into the sky to start a hair-raising flight lasting 22 minutes.

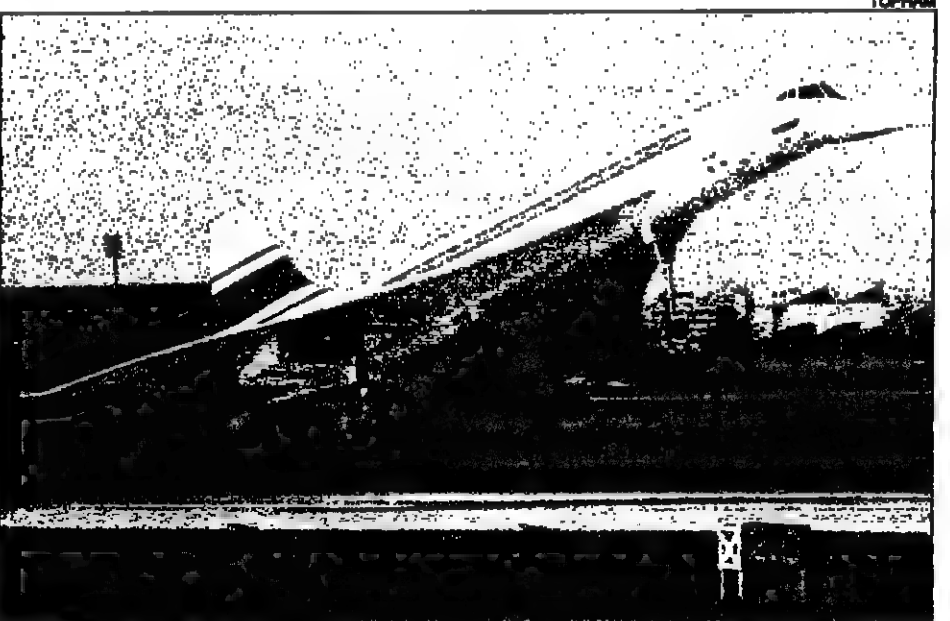
A few moments earlier, as the engines of the prototype 002 were run up at the end of the runway, there had been a moment of tension which threatened the success of the flight. Re-heat, the system under which fuel is sprayed into the jet pipe to give added thrust, failed to ignite in No. 4 engine.

The crew shut the engine down and tried a second time. This time the re-heat lit and the flight was on.

Two other potentially dangerous incidents occurred during the flight: the first was when a light aircraft appeared about a mile away from the Concorde as the super-sonic airliner was preparing to land at RAF Fairford, Gloucestershire.

The second incident also occurred during the approach to land when the crew found that both radio altimeters had failed. Mr Trubshaw said afterwards: "I had to judge the height for myself."

Looking happy and relaxed, and wiping the cream from a celebratory cake from his chin, he said of the flight: "It went very well. I found it a great advantage to have flown the French Concorde."



Early days: the prototype British-built Concorde takes off on one of its first proving flights in April 1969

PERSONAL COLUMN

TRADE: 0171 481 982
FAX: 0171 481 9313

BMD5: 0171 680 6880
PRIVATE: 0171 481 4000

BIRTHS

CONWAYVILLE - On April 9th in Farnham, to Caroline (née Symonds) and Laurence, a son, James Laurence Conway, 7lb 10oz, 34in long.

FARNHAM - On Wednesday April 9th, 1998 to Kate (née Goodwin) and Stephen, a daughter, Anna Elizabeth, a sister for Lucy.

GLoucester - On 8th April 1998 at St Mary's, Farnham, to Mary (née Lee) and John, a son, Frederick James Peter (Freddie), a brother for Charlie.

HARVEY - On 27th March to Jonathan (née Stirling) and James, twin sons, Thomas and James, 7lb 10oz, 34in long.

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DEATHS

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OBITUARIES

BILL REID

Bill Reid, Canadian sculptor, died on March 13 aged 78. He was born on January 12, 1920.

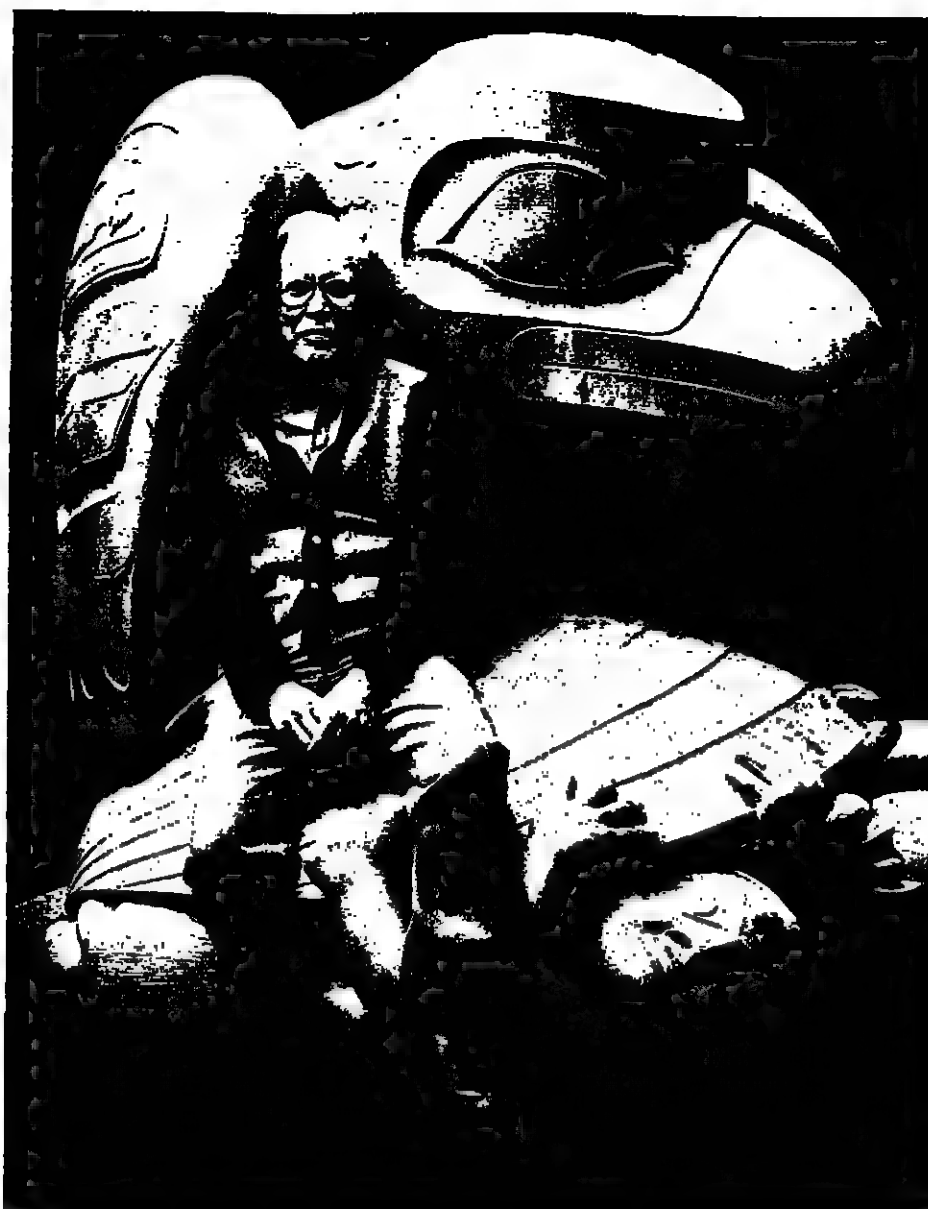
Bill Reid helped to restore the pride of Indians across North America. As the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss wrote, he "tended a flame that was close to dying". After his death, two thousand people gathered in the great hall of the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia, and from four in the afternoon until midnight speaker after speaker spoke in praise of the departed carver, goldsmith, and rediscoverer of the art of the Haida. These are the northwest Pacific Coast people whose home was known by white Canadians as the Queen Charlotte Islands, until — thanks largely to the influence of Reid — it regained its name of 7,000 years, Haida Gwaii.

Reid not only preserved traditional Haida art — notably some of the great totem poles — but gave the tradition new impetus and a contemporary feel. The Haida culture had been in retreat since 1850, ravaged by poverty, smallpox and the outlawing of many customs. Now, however, collectors prize not only Reid's work but that of the generation of younger artists whom he inspired, such as Robert Davidson and Jim Hart. His own work is found in museums as far afield as Paris, London and Asia.

If Reid took pride in his Haida roots, it was in the teeth of the prejudices of his youth. His mother, he wrote, had learnt "the major lesson taught the native peoples of our hemisphere during the first half of this century: that it was somehow sinful and debased to be, in white terms, an Indian, and [she] certainly saw no reason to pass any pride in that part of their heritage to her children".

So it was not until his teens that, with an American father of German Scots stock, Reid became aware of his mother's ancestry, let alone that she was the grand-niece of the great Haida carver Charles Edenshaw (1837-1920); nor was it until his twenties that he had a proper conversation with his maternal grandfather, Charlie Gladstone, an artist whose work, if not of the first rank, was executed before the breakdown of Haida culture.

At high school on Vancouver Island, William Ronald Reid had been excited by Kandinsky; and, in a year's course at Victoria College, by Cézanne, Van Gogh and Picasso. And when, after several years' work in commercial radio in British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec, he became an announcer with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in Toronto, he enrolled in a course of platinum



and diamond setting at Ryerson College, finding stimulus in the contemporary industrial design of Charles Eames and the Scandinavians. He went on to a year's course in jewellery design at London's Central School of Art and Design — acquiring the perspective without which deconstructed native artists can so easily slide into kitsch.

Crucial, however, was the late meeting with his grandfather, as was the chance in Toronto to study the Royal Ontario Museum's collection of northwest coast artefacts, in particular the great totem pole

from the village of Tanu, home of the grandmother whom he had never known, and whom his mother had described as "a saint". During his year at the Central School, Reid took every opportunity to study artefacts in English collections.

In 1953 he joined a team that salvaged totems from the former villages of Ninistim, Tanu and Skedans, and took them to the University of British Columbia, where the president, Norman McKenzie, was drawing up plans for a Totem Park on the campus. Reid also made a film about this salvage work. The reaction

was mixed, however, with some critics arguing that the poles did not belong in museums, and that decay was part of the life cycle understood by their makers. Haida artefacts were brought to international attention, but some said that to call them "art" was to force them into an alien category.

The controversy about the "selling out" of native culture by bringing it to the notice of the white majority continues to rage in Canada (as elsewhere). In 1958 Reid was commissioned to build two Haida houses on the campus, and Harry Hawthorn, head of the

anthropology department, recognising his skill and knowledge, invited him to join the Kwakiutl carver Mungo Martin in the creation of a totem pole. Then Reid, Hawthorn and Wilson Duff of the University of Victoria went on a field trip to the Queen Charlottes to survey and rescue decaying poles, which now stand in the UBC Museum of Anthropology, as do Reid's own massive *Sea Wolf* (1960) and *Bear* (1966). Roughly hewn from cedar, these are a marked contrast to his polished version of *Raven Discovering Mankind in a Clamshell*.

Though a public artist, working in forms which had evolved as statements of their owners' lineage and status in Haida society, Reid was always glad to accept private commissions, whether for jewellery (in boxwood as well as metal) or the carving of a front door. Nor did he confine himself to single figures: in frieze or miniature totem pole, the creatures of his bestiary, tails and tongues in each other's mouths, make a line that is always graceful and often witty, and affirms the Haida view of the interrelatedness of all beings.

Reid's work was the subject of more than one critical study, and he himself collaborated on a number of books, including *Form and Freedom* (with Bill Holm) and *Haida Monumental Art* (with George MacDonald).

In 1987, in protest against wholesale logging on Lyell Island in the former Queen Charlotte Islands, Reid ceased work on *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii*, a canoe of men and bears representing the journey along the river of life, which had been commissioned by the Government. His moral authority in Canada was now such that the logging ceased. Then, battling against Parkinson's disease which had been creeping up on him for years, he completed the work — which now stands, as intended, in the courtyard of the Canadian Embassy in Washington DC. For years, the artistic proponent of the Haida nation, Reid had become a representative of all Canada.

Bill Reid was twice married.

MILESTONES



Dame Mary Cartwright, DBE, FRS, mathematician and Mistress of Girton College, Cambridge, 1949-88, died on April 3 aged 97. She was born on December 17, 1900.

After working with the mathematician G. H. Hardy at Oxford, Mary Cartwright moved to Girton in Cambridge, where she was to be Mistress for 19 years. Her academic papers are severely technical, but she also promoted the causes of good maths teaching in schools and of women in universities. Before the war she had done groundbreaking work which proved an important contribution to chaos theory.

Obituary published on April 7.

Cory Powell, rock drummer, died on April 5 aged 50. He was born on December 29, 1947.

From Rainbow and Badlam to Black Sabbath, the Spinal Tap and Whitesnake, Cory Powell seemed to be the frenzied drummer in all the groups with the worst album covers of the 1970s and 1980s. He came to prominence in 1971 when he joined the Jeff Beck Group. When they split up, the pop producer Mickie Most kept him busy with session work, including early recordings by Hot Chocolate. In 1974 Powell's skills were best displayed on the drum solo *Dance With the Devil*.

which reached number three in the singles chart. Two other headache-inducing hits followed before Powell joined the former Deep Purple guitarist Ritchie Blackmore. This year, he was to have gone on the road with Brian May from Queen.

Obituary published on April 9.

Tammy Wynette, American country singer, died on April 7, aged 55. She was born on May 5, 1942.

With 30 million records sold, Tammy Wynette was one of the most successful of all female country singers. She signed to Epic Records in 1966, and her hits included *I Don't Want to Play House*, *D-I-V-O-R-C-E* and — her anthem — *Stand By Your Man*. After running from a couple of men whom she happened to have married, she met the singer George Jones, who became her third husband. In seven stormy years they had one daughter, 12 hit singles and ten hit albums, chronicling every twist of their relationship — and his relationship with the bottle. After another disposable marriage, she found her fifth husband, the songwriter and producer George Richey, with whom she stayed for 20 years. In 1988 she filed for bankruptcy, but to her fans she remained "the First Lady of Country".

Obituary published on April 8.



MORRIS COX

Morris Cox of the Gogmagog Press, writer, printer and painter, died on March 31 aged 94. He was born on May 3, 1903.

MORRIS COX is well known to collectors of contemporary private press printing for the books he produced at his Gogmagog Press using homemade presses and scrap materials to make his plates. He was, though, a painter of considerable stature, a sculptor, a puppeteer, a poet, and author of a number of novels. Widely read, and of a philosophical turn of mind, he had studied Egyptology at night school and was greatly interested in mummies and early folklore.

His style of printing was quirky and personal, eschewing the perfectionism of other pressmen, but his books — often limited to just ten or twenty copies — are now keenly sought and bought by collectors. *Gogmagog*, a bibliography and extensive appreciation of his work by David Chambers, Colin Franklin and Alan Tucker, was published by the Private Libraries Association in 1991.

Born at Forest Gate the son of a master builder, Morris George Cox won a scholarship to West Ham School of Art at the age of 13, and joined an advertising agency in the late 1920s. Successful though he was, he found the work unattractive, and he turned to printmaking and writing as a way of life. He drew cartoons for children's annuals, and designed a number of book-jackets.

For a year he ran a shop in Sicilian Arcade, Holborn, selling nothing but his own work, and scampering up from the basement whenever — if ever — customers appeared. He wrote a number of novels during this period, but could find no publisher. In 1938 Faber remarked of *March Demon* that "the reader is exhausted after reading the first few pages", and it must be said that the text — a collage of words and phrases cut from Victorian children's books — has a daunting look, though its mixture of the wisdom and the stupidity of the ordinary world recalls the lunacy of *Tristram Shandy*. (Cox eventually published its 255 pages in a photocopied edition limited to five copies in 1984.)

During the war he served as leader of a light rescue squad, and a later work, *War in a Cock's Egg* (1960), "the apotheosis of an unknown victim of a



war", recalled the horrors of the time.

He married Winifred Cresswell in 1940, and her modest earnings enabled him to continue as writer and artist after the war. Some of his short stories were published in *World Review* in the 1950s, and Routledge published *The Whirligig and Other Poems* in 1954, but declined anything further. Then, at an age when others would have contemplated retirement, Cox decided to publish his poetry (and eventually some of his prose) on his own account. At 57 he founded the Gogmagog Press, and 35 books followed, his poems illuminated with prints of great originality, both in design and the method of printing.

He used an office copying press for many of his books, sliding blocks and type under the platen, and printing the

hand-inked type in the usual way. The blocks, made from lace, string, grasses, cardboard and other scrap materials were printed onto sheets of plastic backed with thin rubber to accommodate their roughness, and after a series of impressions on the plastic, paper was substituted for the block, and the finished design printed back on to it. This laborious process was made all the slower because Cox bound all the books himself.

Work at the press culminated, in his 81st year, with *A Mystique of Mummies*, a series of 20 large and exceptionally powerful linocuts made by the elimination process, using the progressively whittled-away linoleum to print successive colours.

Over the next five years Cox produced a further 38 volumes, in what he called the Gogmagog Photocopy Library, the last appearing in 1989. As well as prewar novels, poems and illustrations, this included new work such as collections of collage prints, which often commented humorously on a world of which Cox felt scarcely a part.

Throughout the whole period of his book production, Cox was also painting. He worked often in gouache, and, regrettably, on cardboard, since mounted canvases cost more than he could afford. Abstracted figures, contorted portraits and subjects from nature were all treated with the same spirited originality as his books.

Alan Tucker has expressed fears that the Gogmagog books will be treated simply as artefacts, their texts left unread, and this may be true of some of the novels, particularly as the editions are so extremely limited. The poetry, though, makes exciting reading, even when at its most complex, and is a perfect complement to the prints: neither can be fully comprehended without the other.

Judging their place is difficult, but the 35 books from the Gogmagog Press stand high in comparison with the other fine presses of this century. They match Pissarro's Eragy Press in their delicate beauty, and their variety of style can be a relief after the ponderous volumes from Kelmscott or the anonymous elegance of the Doves Press. An exhibition of Cox's work was held at the Victoria and Albert Museum in the spring of 1994, following the gift of his own collection to the National Art Library.

He is survived by his wife.

James McIntosh Patrick, painter, died in Dundee on April 7 aged 91. He was born on February 4, 1907.

ESSENTIALLY a popular artist, James McIntosh Patrick won himself a special place in the hearts of Scots — and lovers of Scotland — around the world. A few years ago a print from one of his paintings was the best-selling reproduction in America by a foreign artist.

His panoramic views, mostly done in later years in Angus within twenty miles of Dundee, are constructed with a farmer's understanding of the way that man and nature meet, from field drain to mountain weather. He has even been called "Scotland's Breughel".

Patrick used perspective with all the verve and the curiosity of a hiker or an explorer, bringing many aspects of a scene together through his skills in design. James McIntosh Patrick was born in Dundee. His father, Andrew Patrick, was an architect and an accomplished watercolourist, and James began to paint and to experiment with etching at the age of 14 while he was still at school at Morgan Academy. He enrolled at Glasgow School of Art in 1924, winning a number of student prizes.

In 1926 and 1927 he spent the summers working in France around southern hill-towns such as Carcassonne, preparing a group of etchings which he then offered to a Dundee printseller, who saw enough quality in them to pass them on to the London market.

This was the time of the "print boom", with many enthusiastic collectors, and with Scots artists at the forefront; by the time Patrick had left college in 1928, he had an assured income from Harold Dickens, the London print publisher, of £200 per annum, and during the next few years he produced a popular series of French and Scottish landscapes marked by strong composition and spacious perspective.

However, around 1930 the demand for prints slumped, and Patrick was forced to diversify his activities: he took a part-time post at Dundee College of Art, and made illustrations for postcards and newspapers. Valentine's, the Dundee postcard and reproduction publishers, commis-

sioned views from him of towns all over Britain, which were retailed by Woolworths stores for many years under the name of "Etchographs".

He also turned more to oil painting. He had already shown at the Royal Academy in London from 1928, to a favourable reception in the press. His oil paintings tended to a more atmospheric lighting and treatment.

The Fine Art Society began to sell Patrick's work from 1934, showing his painting *The Three Sisters, Glencoe*, which, though rejected by the Royal Academy, led to the purchase in the following year

of *Winter in Angus* by the Tate Gallery through the trustees of the Chantry Bequest. Also in 1935 *St Francis, Assisi* was sold to the National Gallery of South Africa, and a portrait, *Marion*, won the Guthrie Award at the Royal Scottish Academy. In 1936 Frank Pick, the vice-chairman of London Transport, commissioned a number of Underground posters from Patrick; these and subsequent commissions from mainline railway companies of views of Edinburgh, Loch Lomond, Dryburgh Abbey, the Firth of Forth and the Firth of Tay, made Patrick a familiar artist

to millions in the heyday of railway posters.

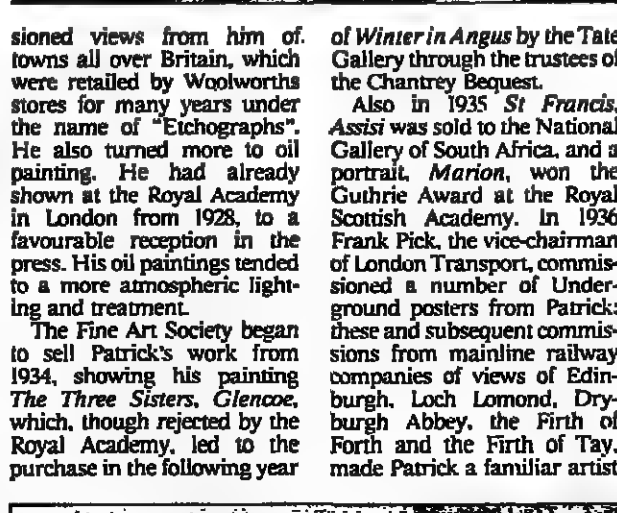
War-time call-up in 1940 gave Patrick a training as a tank driver before he was commissioned in the Camouflage Corps, where he worked on the camouflage of weapons, vehicles and installations, first in Britain and then in North Africa and Italy; with accompanying private battles between his "dulling-down" for safety and CSM's demands for spit-and-polish.

This outdoor living, and the rare chance to make a swift watercolour in the Mediterranean light, were advantages to Patrick after the war, when he began to exhibit and sell his watercolours; and it also brought more outdoor feeling to his oils. He began to take his oil painting easel outside, to paint directly from nature.

These realistic, atmospheric recreations of landscape and life endeared Patrick, from the 1950s onward, to all Scots: many Scottish expatriates treasure prints of his work. And as a lively humorous extempore speaker, Patrick was much in demand and acquired a considerable personal popularity. His 80th birthday retrospective exhibition in 1987 in Dundee, Aberdeen and Liverpool confirmed his huge following.

James McIntosh Patrick married in 1933 Janet Watterston, who died in 1983; there are a son and daughter of the marriage.

JAMES MCINTOSH PATRICK



The Tay Bridge from my Studio Window, painted in 1948: a typical Scottish landscape by James McIntosh Patrick

Equities end on firm note

TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

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PROFILE 28

The high life of Stephen Hinchliffe

BUSINESS

WEEKEND
MONEY
SECTION 2

BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

SATURDAY APRIL 11 1998

Lonrho set for £130m loss as Hondo faces delisting

By Jason Nisse

Lonrho, the troubled conglomerate, is facing a £130 million loss from its exposure to Hondo Oil & Gas, an oil exploration company which faces delisting from the American Stock Exchange and may not be able to pay its debts.

Lonrho has investments valued at £69 million in Hondo and has also extended loans recently stated at \$107 million (£63 million) to the oil group.

On Thursday night Hondo told investors that it was facing problems that may mean it could not maintain its listing on the Amex market in New York. It also said it was in danger of breaching the covenants on the loans extended to it by Lonrho, which also has a controlling shareholding in Hondo. The company

has been exploring for oil in Colombia in conjunction with Amoco Corporation. However, last month, preliminary reports from its Opon 14 well indicated that there might not be enough gas reserves to make it commercially viable.

Unless the Opon 14 tests prove that Hondo has another 13 billion cubic feet of natural gas in the well, this will trigger a default clause in its loan agreement with Lonrho. The British group recently increased its exposure to Hondo by extend-

ing a further loan to the company last year. Hondo also has troubles at its two other wells — Opon 3 and Opon 4. Though they are producing gas, greater than expected falls in the flowing pressure of both wells has occurred and this is limiting production.

The group's shares have slumped in value in recent weeks on the Amex market and were briefly suspended last month because of rapid falls in their value.

A Lonrho spokesman said the group would take a view on whether to write off its investment in Hondo in November, when the term of the current loans run out. He said that any write-off would not affect Lonrho's profits and would only be a balance sheet item. "We control Hondo and we decide whether it goes into default," said the spokesman.

Lonrho has been involved in Hondo for nearly a decade, when the investment was first sanctioned during Tiny Rowland's reign as chief executive. Sir John Craven,

chairman of Lonrho, recently told investors that the group should never have invested in the business and would seek to sell its stake as soon as was practicable.

The group has virtually completed its restructuring, following the approval of the coal and share deals at Thursday's extraordinary meeting, and only has to sell its Princess Hotels business. Second round bids have just gone in and Lonrho hopes to conclude the £300 million disposal by June.

Bank of Japan disciplines 98 for corruption

FROM ROBERT WHYMAN IN TOKYO

JAPAN'S central bank, shaken by corruption allegations, yesterday disciplined a total of 98 officials in an attempt to restore its battered authority.

The Bank of Japan announced the mass punishment after completing an internal investigation that found many of its personnel accepted lavish entertainment from private banks.

The latest move came as the Bank tried desperately to shore up its credibility. The country's economic problems threatened to cause the yen to drift even lower on the foreign exchanges.

The BoJ yesterday launched an aggressive round of intervention in an attempt to drive the yen back towards 125 to the dollar. Dealers said the action — in thin trade over the Easter weekend — caught the market off-guard and ensured that the yen rose from about ¥131 to the dollar to ¥127.5.

The BoJ was supported in its actions by the Ministry of Finance which insisted that the yen was too weak and that share prices should rise with the latest stimulus package. Financial markets, however, continued to respond coolly to the 16 trillion yen (£70 billion) package. Share prices fell sharply in the morning, but regained ground when the yen surged in the afternoon. The Nikkei index closed at 10,481.12, down 55.54 points from Thursday.

Last week, Tokyo prosecutors indicted a senior bank official, Yasuyuki Yoshizawa, on charges of giving out price-sensitive

information and offering other favours to two commercial banks in exchange for entertainment worth ¥4.3 million.

Mr Yoshizawa, 42, head of the capital markets division, became the first BoJ official to be charged with accepting bribes in the central bank's 110-year history.

Yutaka Yamaguchi, the BoJ's deputy governor, yesterday bowed in penance as he apologised for the scandal, and said the Bank was determined to recover public trust.

Among those disciplined were three senior executives who were ordered to give back 20 per cent of their pay for a period of one to five months. Other officials received reprimands.

The investigation of 600



Hayami: repaying salary

staff launched in February revealed that many had maintained questionable contacts with financial firms. While they were not deemed to have broken the law, some officials leaked confidential information to banks that wined and dined them, the BoJ said.

Masaru Hayami, the bank's Governor, along with his two deputies and four executive directors, will voluntarily repay 20 per cent of their salaries for a month in a gesture of repentance for the scandal. Mr Hayami's predecessor, Yasuo Matsushita, resigned last month to take responsibility for an affair that has severely dented the central bank's prestige.

The Ministry of Finance has also lost credibility with the public since the repeated revelations of corruption. Two ministry officials have been arrested this year on suspicion of receiving bribes from big banks in exchange for leaking confidential information.

The scandals, eroding the once powerful Ministry of Finance's influence over policy, have contributed to public unease about the Government's handling of the economy.

Yesterday, the Government acknowledged that the nation's economy has worsened because of weak consumer spending and bleak corporate sentiment. "The economy is stagnant, and the situation is becoming increasingly severe," the Economic Planning Agency said in its April report.



Peter Gabriel, who co-founded Genesis, is thought to be worth up to £10 million

Peter Gabriel issues writ over handling of tax affairs

By Chris Acres

PETER GABRIEL, the pop singer who co-founded the rock group Genesis before embarking on a successful solo career, is suing his firm of accountants over its handling of his tax affairs.

The writ is the latest in a series of high-profile spats between multimillionaire pop stars and their accountants.

The most serious involved Sting, the singer and former frontman of The Police. His accountant, Keith Moore, was found guilty in 1995 of stealing £6 million from the musician to finance several doomed business ventures.

Mr Gabriel is suing Baker Tilly, a firm of accountants based in West London that specialises in media and the arts. It made an estimated £40 million in sales last year.

The pop singer, thought to be worth up to £10 million, and one of his private companies, is demanding damages for breach of contract for the way the firm dealt with his and his company's tax affairs between 1992 and 1993. He is also suing for breach of duty of care over his tax affairs. It is not known how much money Mr Gabriel is demanding, although it is thought that the figure could run to millions of pounds.

In the early 1990s, Mr Gabriel had just released his successful album *Us* and was setting out on his *Secret World* tour. A source close to the star said: "In 1992, the *Secret World* tour was taking him all around the world and was very profitable. It would have cost several

hundred thousand pounds to stage, with millions running through his bank accounts at the time."

A spokeswoman for Baker Tilly, whose managing partner is Laurence Long, said: "We have not received a writ and if we do we will vigorously defend it." The company refused to make any further comment on its relationship with the pop star.

Mr Gabriel's lawyers refused to discuss the writ.

Call to halt Citibank merger plan

THE planned US merger of Citicorp and Travelers Group faces a call by the senior Democrat on the House Banking Committee for it to be halted pending inquiries into claims that the jailed brother of Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the disgraced former President of Mexico, laundered drug money via Citibank (Tunku Varadarajan writes).

Maxine Waters said: "Let's take a look at Citicorp and see if they are deserving of support for a merger."

US officials are investigating the legality of Raul Salinas transferring \$80 million (£50 million).

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Noodle bar chain on course to float

By Dominic Walsh

WAGAMAMA, the popular Japanese noodle bar chain, could be heading for the stock market. The group has just acquired two new sites in London and is thought to be close to unveiling a new financial partner to fund expansion.

The company, which currently has two restaurants in Soho and Bloomsbury, is to open a 5,000 sq ft restaurant in Wigmore Street, in Central London, this summer, and an 8,000 sq ft branch is expected to open in Camden, North London, next year.

The high-tech refectory-style restaurants are thought to turn over at least £1 million a year each, serving more than 1,000 covers a day and turning the tables an astonishing ten

or more times. The Soho branch serves more than 1,000 kilos of noodles a week.

The concept, which falls between fast food and casual dining, was originally devised by Alan Yau, who used *kaizen* — the Japanese ethos of continual improvement — as his guiding philosophy.

The group is now headed by Ian Neill, the well-regarded former managing director of Rank Restaurants.

Under Mr Yau, who opened his first Wagamama in 1992, the group had plans to open branches in Manchester, New York and Paris en route to an eventual stock market listing. Industry sources now believe the company is planning a flotation in about 12 months' time.

C&W to sell French stake to Italians

CABLE & WIRELESS, the UK telecoms giant, is poised to sell its 20 per cent stake in Bouygues Telecom of France, a mobile phone company, to Telecom Italia. Analysts estimate that the sale could fetch up to £500 million (Chris Ayres writes).

The deal is part of an international agreement between the two companies that could create the world's second largest carrier of international traffic. C&W has agreed in principle to the sale, although the price is still being negotiated.

Dick Brown, the chief executive of C&W, has previously said that he intends to raise £1 billion by selling about 50 minority interests. The shake-up of C&W has already attracted controversy, after it announced 1,500 job losses.

Lloyds TSB glitch halts clients' cash

By Richard Miles, Banking Correspondent

THOUSANDS of Lloyds TSB customers were left strapped for cash yesterday morning after a computer failure crippled the bank's automatic teller machine network.

Emergency engineers were called in late on Thursday evening to tackle the computer glitch, but were unable to remedy the problems until noon yesterday.

Meanwhile, customers relying on the clearance of cheques and funds deposited at the start of the week were prevented from withdrawing cash, even though the ATM system said that their accounts were in credit.

One disgruntled customer from Kent said: "The cash-point was showing the correct balance, but it wouldn't let me

withdraw even a tenner. It was a good job I had a building society account."

A Lloyds TSB spokeswoman attributed the problems to the failure of an overnight update of account balances. Normally, cheques deposited on a Monday are accredited to the account by Thursday, but cash-point users cannot withdraw the money until the next day.

"In this case, some customers were unable to withdraw cash because the overnight update of information failed," the spokeswoman said. "However, our technicians worked through the night and the ATM system is now working normally."

Lloyds TSB, whose chief executive is Peter Ellwood, has one of the largest ATM networks in the UK.

A WEEK IN THE CITY

Cars, stamps and cigarettes shared the chorus line this week, but it was a single red umbrella that stole the show. Citicorp, America's biggest bank, said it was merging with Travelers Group, in a \$140 billion (£85 billion) deal that will create the world's largest financial services company. Citigroup will adopt Travelers' red umbrella as its logo.

News of the deal sent Wall Street soaring, and pushed the FTSE 100 through 6,100 and reignited the prospects of a fresh round of banking mergers, as European banks scramble for position. Citicorp is the world's biggest issuer of credit cards. Travelers operates across the financial services spectrum, and last year paid \$9 billion for Salomon Brothers, the Wall Street investment bank.

President Clinton moved to reassure tobacco farmers, after the tobacco industry rejected plans for a settlement. Under a deal agreed last year, companies including RJR Nabisco and Philip Morris were to contribute \$368.5 billion over 25 years towards the cost of treating tobacco-related illnesses in 40 states. The deal would have brought immunity from mass lawsuits.

The industry has choked on tougher legislation that would have pushed the cost up to \$506 billion and removed much of the legal protection. One executive complained that Congress was asking the tobacco industry to sign a suicide note.

The Bank of England left interest rates at 7.25 per cent, as two vintage names passed into new ownership. The Savoy Group, which includes Claridge's, the Berkeley and the Savoy itself, was sold to a group of American investors for £520 million, bringing to an end 110 years of independent ownership. The Savoy's arcane two-tier share structure has frustrated countless suitors over the years, including Sir Maxwell Joseph of Grand Metropolitan, Lord Matthews of Trafalgar House, and Lord Forte of Ripley, who spent years locked in acrimonious wranglings with the late Sir Hugh Wommer.

The sale to Blackstone Group ensures a £310 million windfall for Granada Group, headed by Gerry Robinson, which inherited a key stake in the Savoy when it took over Forte three years ago.

Further down the Strand, Stanley Gibbons, the most famous name in stamps, was sold for £13.5 million to Flying Flowers, a mail order company based in Jersey.

Thorn, owner of Radio Rentals, announced that it is in takeover talks with an unnamed suitor — possibly an American finance house. Thorn has been on a one-way slide since emerging from EMI less than two years ago.

Gaskets blew down at the Royal Automobile Club, which a week ago ousted its chairman, Jeffrey Rose, after he proposed the organisation float off its motoring services business. On reflection, the RAC seemed to think this was not such a bad idea, and disclosed it had hired City advisers and would consult with its members about a £400 million demerger. Rose is to requisition an extraordinary meeting of shareholders, with a view to forcing the removal of the RAC board. The RAC is writing to members this weekend.

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Hinchliffe has recently come out of his shell: a Yorkshire businessman acquaintance says that he is "full of bravado, arrogance and front"

Lowdown on the high life of a failed empire builder

When the first Sikorsky helicopters started to appear in the 1930s a French aviator expert is reputed to have said: "How does it stay up there? There is no visible means of support." The same could be said about Stephen Hinchliffe, the controversial South Yorkshire businessman whose Facia retailing empire collapsed with debts of more than £100 million in mid-1996.

While Sears — whose chief executive, Liam Strong, was forced to resign for trusting Hinchliffe — fights to retrieve some of the £70 million it lost through its involvement with Facia, while many of Facia's 5,000 former employees study jobcentre windows in hope of finding work, while estate agents around the country and in Germany try to find new tenants for shops formerly occupied by Facia brands including Saxe, Freeman Hardy Willis, Sock Shop, Bata and Oakland, while investigators from the Serious Fraud Office pore over files and interview former associates of Hinchliffe stretching from Tel Aviv to Tooting, while Department of Trade and Industry lawyers prepare court papers for this autumn's hearing at which the DTI will apply to have him disqualified as a director, Hinchliffe continues to enjoy a glamorous and opulent lifestyle.

In the year or so after Facia collapsed, Hinchliffe kept a pretty low profile. He did not turn up for the group's creditors meeting in Leeds, sending his long-time associate, Christopher Harrison, to face the fiasco. And calls were immediately directed to his solicitor, Keith Oliver, of Peters & Peters, the man who successfully defended Kevin Maxwell against fraud and theft charges.

However, recently Hinchliffe has come out of his shell. A South Yorkshire businessman who knows him well says that Hinchliffe looked quite stressed six or nine months ago but recently he had seen him and he was "full of bravado, arrogance and front. He is back on form." Oliver, still speaking on his behalf, said: "Mr Hinchliffe will continue his business comeback."

While the receivers sold off Facia's castle-like headquarters in Parkhead Hall, Sheffield — with its breathtaking boardroom and a seat for Hinchliffe that looked more like a throne — the oft Sin Hinchliffe still occupies his home in Dore, a commuter village outside Sheffield. Longacres boasts a dozen rooms, a swimming pool, a host of

How long can the former head of collapsed retailer Facia enjoy a life of luxury?

Jason Nissé and Lucy McDonald report

manicured lawns, including one the size of a football pitch, and a helicopter pad. Hinchliffe is said by locals to use a helicopter to fly from Dore at least twice a week. He entertains regularly, making up for no longer being on the board of his beloved Sheffield United by hosting football parties in front of a widescreen TV pumping out televised matches.

The Hinch, though, does not stay in all the time. Indeed he loves to go out and socialise. He has a chauffeur-driven Rolls-Royce, which ferries him to his favourite haunts. His most regular hangout is the Rising Sun, in Abbey Lane, Sheffield, a friendly, comfortable pub. Lunch is often taken at Mediterranean, a tapas bar where a meal costs an average of £10. Dinner is sometimes at Ruffini, an Italian restaurant, or the Cavendish Hotel in the scenic Derbyshire village of Baslow. The set menu at the Cavendish is £37.50 a head and the cheapest wine is £17.50 a bottle. Hinchliffe has a penchant for champagne and fine cigars. He is often seen driving any of a number of convertible cars, some boasting one of his HINCHI to HINCHI3 number plates, and is reputed to have a collection of more than 60 in a warehouse in Atercliffe, Sheffield.

In the past few months Hinchliffe

has seen most of what is left of his empire collapse. His German shoe business, which he set up in early 1996 to take control of the local arm of Bata Shoes, went into receivership in November. Four suppliers in the business's home town of Bensheim applied to have the company wound up for not paying its debts and a German lawyer called Klaus Peter Woitas took control of the troubled operation with its 103 outlets and 600 employees.

The German operation's UK holding company — Strategic Group — in which Hinchliffe is the only shareholder, paid £33,000 to Hinchliffe and £33,000 to his company, Chase Montagu, in the 18 months to January 31, 1997. Its accounts for this period were qualified by its auditors, Robert M. Grierson & Co, last October for "failure to prepare group accounts and cashflow statements contrary to the Companies Act 1985".

Colibri of London, the lighter business that Hinchliffe retained after Facia went under, saw its franchise withdrawn by its US parent company, Colibri is now under the control of Howard Hodgson, the former funeral director whose attempt to turn Colibri's rival, Ronson, into a clothing brand led to his ousting from Ronson, which is

now run by Victor Kiam of Remington shavers fame.

The last of Hinchliffe's main operations is French & Scott, the lingerie brand. This was served with a winding-up petition last year by Price Waterhouse, the accountants appointed as administrators of Facia Footwear, the operation that owned the shoe chains that Hinchliffe bought from Sears. Egged on by Sears, Price Waterhouse has waged a bitter war to win back as many of the assets of the Facia companies that it does not control and Hinchliffe's personal wealth as it can. This included obtaining a Mareva injunction against Hinchliffe, which prevented him from disposing of any of his assets.

Price Waterhouse's claims have meant that BDO Stoy Hayward, the liquidator of the Facia empire, has not been able to distribute any of the assets left in the group to creditors.

Last October, French & Scott filed a Companies Voluntary Arrangement (CVA) to avoid being placed in either receivership or administration. According to the report filed by the supervisor of the scheme — Derek Woolley of the Sheffield office of Poppleton & Appleby, the accountants — the business owed nearly £429,000 to creditors, while its last accounts showed assets of only £41,401.

Among the creditors were Colibri — owed £33,900 — and Chase Montagu, Hinchliffe's private company — owed £33,400. The Inland Revenue — owed £53,300 in back taxes — was the only creditor to oppose the CVA. The Times repeatedly attempted to contact Woolley but he was unavailable for comment.

Woolley is also one of the receivers appointed to recover a debt owed to Lloyds Bank by Chase Montagu, Hinchliffe's investment company. Last October the receivers took control over a property owned by the company in Sheffield. Hinchliffe's solicitors told The Times that the debt to Lloyds has now been satisfied, and Chase Montagu has no solvency problems. Indeed, the firm's most recent accounts — for 1996 — showed it making a pre-tax profit of £758,000 after paying £117,000 to its directors — Hinchliffe and Harrison — and £188,000 to three members of staff.

Chase Montagu seems to be the reason Hinchliffe can continue his high-on-the-hog lifestyle. But — with the SFO, the DTI and various creditors still snooping into his affairs — there must be a question mark about how long this can carry on.

Can the odd couple stay wedded to joys of power-sharing?

They are being described as The Odd Couple. One is measured and soft-spoken, embodies "Wasp" decorum, wears classic suits, is physically trim, has divorced and remarried, lives in the quiet of the suburbs, is a gourmet chef and has a passion for Japanese rock gardens.

The other is the son of Jewish immigrants from Poland, wears brown (yes, brown) suits, carries a noticeable paunch, has stayed married to the same woman for 43 years, cannot cook for toffee buns in a flashy Manhattan apartment, and has all those qualities that the more old-fashioned Brooklyners have in abundance: feistiness, chutzpah and street-smarts.

The first, John Reed of Citicorp, has now joined the second, Sanford Weill of the Travelers Group, in a record-breaking merger of their two companies, worth \$140 billion (£85 billion). They are so unlike each other that many are wondering how long the marriage will survive.

At their press conference on Monday, when the occasion came as close to a "love fest" as Wall Street ever gets, the difference in style and tenor was apparent. Asked whether they could work with each other, Mr Reed said: "Sandy is a good person. I don't have any problems with Sandy." This was a clipped and clear pronouncement, rather in the manner of a Cordelia unwilling to leave heart in mouth.

Mr Weill, on the other hand, was flamboyant, throwing in this quip in the manner of a true New Yorker: "I'm used to sharing power and responsibility — I've been married to my wife for 43 years." At this, he chuckled, and the world chuckled with him.

It was left to Mr Reed to come up with the roughage. Deflating the humour that had crept in on the gathering, he said: "We are now able to deal with the consumer across his or her whole life — the young are looking for transnational business, primarily banking, whereas older people need somewhat more mature advice-based business." The first would come from Citicorp, the second from Travelers.

Even if the marriage does survive, people question for how long the two will remain as co-chairmen and joint chief executives of the new Citigroup. Surely, people on Wall Street say, two racehorses cannot run in tandem forever. Who will break free and strike ahead?

Most assume that, over time, Mr Weill, now 65, will stand taller in the new group. They assume this because he is a scrapper who has fought his way to the top, climbing the financial Everest without oxygen or sherpas. The son of a dressmaker, his first job after he left Cornell University in 1955 was as a messenger for Bear Stearns, the New York stockbroker.

Then, on about \$150 a month, he was supporting a



Weill: flamboyant

wife and a child and an ego that was nowhere near satiation. In 1960, tired of "going nowhere", he borrowed \$200,000 from friends and family, bought a seat on the New York Stock Exchange, and started a brokerage firm.

Mr Reed, 59, is of more conventional corporate stock, although by no means the scion of a blue-blood banking family. Born in Chicago, he was raised in Argentina and Brazil, where his father worked as an executive for an American

corporation. He took an MBA from the Sloan School at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1965 and his first job was as an engineer for Goodyear.

His calm, unhurried exterior conceals the profound energy that propelled him to the top of Citicorp in 1984, when, at 45, he became the bank's youngest chief executive. He had an unenviable task, succeeding the fearsome Walter Wriston, a man with an acerbic wit who stomped with hobnailed



Reed: conventional

boots over the fuddy-duddies of the banking world. Mr Reed also had to pick up the pieces after Mr Wriston's blunders, one of which was to commit Citicorp to lend at colossal levels to the Third World. The resultant debt problem was to blow up in Mr Reed's face as the group rode through some of its rockiest moments.

Mr Weill, too, has had his ups and downs, and the biggest "down" came in 1985, when he quit as chairman of American Express after failing to buy Fireman's Fund. He wallowed in his "unemployed" state, making his children buy dinner and cigars for their "jobless Dad", but bounced back after following his India-rubber instincts to buy Commercial Credit in 1986.

If anything, Mr Weill is the more inventive, and it is no surprise that he made the first approach to discuss the merger, taking his idea to Mr Reed on February 25 at a meeting of the Business Council in Washington. In the mythology that has swiftly fallen into place after Monday's deal, Mr Weill is believed simply to have said to Mr Reed: "Hey pal, come back to my room at the Park Hyatt when this gig is done. I've got something that will blow your socks off."

There, a beaming, ebullient Mr Weill posed the question: "How about it?" Mr Reed later revealed, with characteristic understatement, that he was a little surprised: "I said I hadn't thought about it, but I would take a look." True to his word, Mr Reed, ever the engineer, went back to his closest advisers and studied the offer. No possibility was left undissected, no option left unquestioned. At the Travelers Group, too, matters proceeded with the utmost secrecy. In discussion papers, Citicorp was code-named Saturn and Travelers was Jupiter. Why? "Because," explained Mr Weill, "it was a marriage made in heaven." At Citicorp, reflecting Mr Reed's less lurid manner, the companies were simply called Red and Blue.

Typical of the two men — and an illuminating lesson to their subordinates — was the manner in which they saved the combined company about \$100 million in "kiss" fees by brokering the deal themselves. Neither approves of spending when that can be avoided, and an early employee of Mr Weill's first brokerage recalled, recently how his frugal boss gave him an office "in a closet... we took a door off the closet, and the desk was half in and half out."

Neither man stinted, however, on the celebrations that followed news of the merger. They dined out together in the company of their wives, at Le Cirque 2000, New York's glitziest eatery. If Wall Street is to be turned on its head, then bread must be broken in style.

TUNKU VARADARAJAN



Pelé's game

WHILE Pelé is in Manchester — no doubt cheering on Liverpool against United — he has been promoting his cause as the great reformer of Brazilian football. In his role as Sports Minister, the soccer great has reformed the structure of Brazilian clubs to make them limited companies and is now looking for investment in the Brazilian leagues.

A delegation including Peter Kemyon, deputy chief executive of Manchester United, Glen Cooper of Apax Partners Corporate Finance and senior executives from AC Milan, are to fly to Rio next month for a "fact-finding mission".

Though Pelé will be there to welcome them, one wonders

in what capacity. A row about his relationship with Tele-globo, the TV network that has signed him as a commentator for the World Cup, has led to threats that he might have to resign as Sports Minister.

● **WHAT do points mean?** Points mean prizes. Just ask the Barcelona holder who has racked up no fewer than 60,000 points since the launch of its loyalty scheme ten years ago. This entitles the holder to 1,500 golf balls, the adoption of 50 animals at Whipsnade zoo, or 25 bungee jumps over the River Thames. And he had to spend only £600,000 for the privilege.



Edgar reign

FURTHER evidence of the booming property market comes my way from the pic-

turesque Lune Valley in Lancashire, where Thurland Castle has been sold for more than £1 million through agent Brodie Marshall Hotels. The new owner, who intends to convert it from a conference venue into a country house hotel, must be hoping for better luck than some previous occupants. Built in the 14th century by Sir Thomas Tunstall, it was sacked after being besieged in the Civil War. It was restored in the 19th century only to be gutted by fire in 1879. Paperwork on the castle's sale, which comes complete with crenellations and battlements, must have been pretty straightforward. The vendor was a Mr Ernest Edgar, the purchaser Mr David Edgar. I am told they are not related.

Soeur-eal

LA GUERRE du Publicis — which has rend around the French advertising scene — is finally over. Maurice Lévy, executive chairman of the internationally influential Publicis, has finally succeeded in negotiating a truce between Michele Bleustein-Blanchet and Elisabeth Badinter (née Bleustein-Blanchet), the two surviving daughters, and principal heirs of Publicis's

founder, Marcel Bleustein-Blanchet. Publicis's shares are controlled to the important extent of 38.4 per cent by "Somarel" — a Bleustein-Blanchet family holding company set up nearly 30 years ago by the late Marcel Bleustein-Blanchet and in which Elisabeth Badinter has been holding 33.38 per cent and her younger sister, Michele, 29.67 per cent. Fiqued by Elisabeth's influence as a member of the Publicis steering committee, Michele asked SBC Warburg Dillon Reed to find a buyer for her stake.

However, Lévy has now arranged for the greater part of Michele's in "Somarel" to be bought by her sister Elisabeth. And may they live happily ever after.

JASON NISSÉ

TOURIST RATES

	Bank Buys	Bank Sells
Australia \$	2.85	2.48
Canada \$	22.38	20.72
Denmark Dkr	82.36	81.25
France F	2.513	2.325
Germany DM	0.581	0.549
Italy Lit	12.19	11.30
Japan Yen	8.79	8.04
Netherlands Gld	10.05	9.28
Portugal Esc	3.20	2.95
Spain Pes	163	154
Switzerland Fr	12.01	11.01
Sweden Kr	1.38	1.13
UK £	1.26	1.17
USA \$	0.55	0.50
Japan Yen	3179	2942
Malaysia	255.81	215.26
Netherlands Gld	0.885	0.824
New Zealand \$	3.615	3.320
Norway Kr	3.18	2.94
Portugal Esc	13.22	12.28
S Africa Rand	324.09	302.05
Spain Pes	3.15	2.93
Sweden Kr	269.24	250.45
Switzerland Fr	14.80	13.90
Switzerland Fr	2.69	2.46
Turkey Lira	420913	405438
USA \$	1.783	1.640

Notes for small denominations: bank notes only as supplied by Barclays Bank PLC. Different rates apply to travellers' cheques. Rates as at 08.00 on trading yesterday.

THE SUNDAY TIMES

Japan on the verge

When Sony chairman Norio Ohga said Japan was on the verge of collapse economists scoffed at the hyperbole. But many ordinary Japanese believe their country is facing just such an emergency and are deeply pessimistic...

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RUGBY LEAGUE: WARRIORS FAIL TO SATISFY COACH DESPITE DISMISSING RIVALS IN AWESOME DISPLAY

Sharks go top after gamble pays off

MARK JOHNSON scored a try two minutes from time as Hull Sharks' remarkable return to the top flight continued at a wet and windy Boulevard with a 6-4 defeat of London Broncos, who have made a miserable start.

The Broncos lost 32-6 in their opening league game at home to Halifax last week, which was followed by the return of Tony Currie, the coach, to Australia because of a family illness.

At least the Broncos were more resilient than last Sunday, restricting Hull to a 2-0 half-time lead, despite playing into a stiff wind. Then they took the lead on 59 minutes when Damien Chapman burst through and exchanged passes with Nick Mardon before going over. However, the scrum half missed the conversion attempt from a comfortable position.

Hull turned down two chances to kick at goal from close range in the dying minutes as they attempted to claim the victory rather than settle for a draw. Then they ran the ball on the last tackle and Hito Okesene, Alan Hunt and Graeme Hallas — who had kicked his side into the lead with a first-half penalty — combined to set up Johnson.

The South African wing dived over in the corner and, despite Hallas missing his attempt at adding the two extra points, the Sharks had sealed a famous victory.

Hull sit proudly alongside Wigan at the top, but Peter Walsh, the coach, and Hunt, the captain, both admitted that they must improve quickly if they want their splendid start to continue.

Walsh said: "We were devoid of ideas and London were stiff opposition. They punished us for our mistakes and we were lucky to come away with a win. If we keep winning the close ones, we'll have a half-decent season."

Hunt, whose decision it was to run two penalties close to the London line in the build-up to Johnson's try, added: "We had a touch of the collywobblers for the first 78 minutes. We tried to push it too much and if we keep going like that, we'll get caught out."

Tony Rea, the London chief executive, praised his team's defensive work. "We conceded 70 points in our previous two games, so that was a real big positive — we played with a lot of character," he said.

"But we also played some dumb stuff. We would exert pressure and make a half-break, but then force a pass when we should have just played the next tackle. A win would fix everything."



Smith, the Wigan half back, eludes two would-be St Helens tacklers to set up a break in his side's victory at Knowsley Road yesterday

St Helens 18
Wigan Warriors 38

By Christopher Irvine

WIGAN have work to do in toughening up mentally and are far from the finished article, according to John Monie, their coach. Try telling that, though, to Shaun McRae, his fellow Australian and opposite number at St Helens.

McRae could not hide his admiration for the way in which the opposition dismantled his generally woebegone side in the JTB Super League at Knowsley Road yesterday.

"We had an initial go and another shot at the start of the second half, but they were far too good," McRae said, shaking his head. "They were considerably better, but where we deserve some credit was in scoring 18 points. Their defence is absolutely fantastic, almost impenetrable. There just isn't a weakness."

Monie was less lavish in his praise and furious over the apology of a tackle by O'Connor that enabled Newlove to score a consolation third try before Johnson claimed a sixth for Wigan. "Things like that may cost someone a spot at Wembley," Monie said. His demands on his players are almost as legendary as the prizes in his name.

Aside from the gaffes and

Monie demands ruthless attitude

blunders that littered St Helens' performance was the realisation that they do not possess the calibre of player to match Wigan in this sort of mood. Sullivan and Newlove, individuals of proven ability, were strangely quiet and though Joyn, Sculthorpe and Goldspink never gave up in the pack, solid contributions were no match for genuine inspiration.

All of Wigan's tries were scored by their backs, including a couple of sublime efforts by Robinson on one wing and Gilmour, making his second full appearance, on the other, which, in the space of three minutes before half-time, transformed a tight contest into a runaway affair.

Gilmour, 20, a product of the Wigan academy but who, like Robinson, hails from Leeds, is one of those adaptable players that Monie especially likes, as happy tackling and taking the ball forward in the second row as causing damage out in the three-quarters. Long, Joyn and Martyn all had stabs at stop-

ping the rangy youngster, but Gilmour finished powerfully and with a smile from ear to ear.

It would be wrong to think that there is no pleasing Monie, because any win at St Helens is something to be savoured, but he knows that his side has so much more to offer. "I don't think we're playing well enough at the moment to get into a really



Monie: hard taskmaster

tough second-half game," he said. "We're going to have to work harder on mental toughness, but we're getting better."

It has not been the best of weeks for St Helens, with a strike threat by players over bonus cuts and injuries that forced McRae into a couple of gambles. Martyn was hobbling like an injured bird after 20 minutes and, although he scored a good try after linking with Goulding, he never seemed comfortable. Opposite the live wire Paul and Smith for Wigan at half back, the pair were simply no match.

When Haigh cut back inside to beat Smith after 85sec, St Helens were as surprised as anyone. "At times like that, you wish the full-time hooter would go then," McRae said. It was the only attack of substance that the home side managed throughout the first half, in which they were fortunate not to suffer to a greater extent, given the dithering of Atcheson at full back. Radlinski, bursting into the line, took a wonderful pass by Farrell on the left to split

Haigh and Smith for Wigan's first try, in the 24th minute. Farrell then replied to an earlier Goulding penalty, but 6-6 quickly became 18-6 to Wigan, courtesy of Gilmour and, beforehand, Robinson, who evaded two tackles in the middle of the pitch, drifted to the outside and outsprung Haigh and Goulding in a 60-metre dash.

Martyn's try early in the second half from Goulding's grubber-kick was a carbon copy of the one that helped St Helens to beat Bradford Bulls in the Silk Cut Challenge Cup final last year, now a distant memory. As their handling errors mounted and discipline worsened, Connolly, Smith and Johnson scored further tries and Farrell added two more penalties to add to his four conversions.

After two defeats already by Wigan this season, St Helens' only solace is that they do not face them again until July. By then, though, Monie might have Wigan up to scratch.

SCORES: St Helens: Tries: Haigh, Martyn, Newlove, Goulding (2). Wigan: Tries: Robinson, Paul, Gilmour, Connolly, Smith, Johnson. Goals: Farrell (2).
ST HELENS: P. Atcheson, C. Smith, A. Haigh, P. Newlove, A. Sullivan, T. Martyn, R. Goulding, B. Goldspink, J. Robinson, J. O'Connell, J. Joyn, P. Sculthorpe, K. Long, M. Goldspink, S. Long, I. Prosser, D. Smith, P. Anderson.
WIGAN: Warrington: K. Radlinski, L. Gilmour, G. Connolly, D. Moore, J. Robinson, H. Paul, A. Smith, A. Martyn, R. McConnochie, C. O'Connor, D. Radlinski, M. Cassidy, A. Farrell, Substitutes: R. Cullen, S. Clarke, S. Higgins, P. Johnson.
Referee: R. Smith (Cardiff).

Prospects bleak for Warrington

Warrington Wolves 4
Salford Reds 37

By a Correspondent

WARRINGTON Wolves released 22 players during the off-season, enabling their wage bill to be cut by £400,000 and Darryl van de Velde, their coach, to recruit ten new players to help redress the balance. It is still early days this season, but judging from this inept performance, there are few signs that the heavy turnover will coincide with a significant improvement in their fortunes.

After narrowly avoiding relegation last year, they have failed clearly to eradicate last

season's problems and may well turn out to be grateful that there will be no relegation from the Super League at the end of this campaign.

Salford's ageing set of forwards has been considered a possible Achilles' heel as the Reds try to improve on their sixth place of last season, but with David Hulme providing an inspirational lead in his first match as captain, in the absence of Andy Platt, Salford dominated the forward contest and their backs capitalised on that supremacy.

Ironically, it was Martin Crompton, a former Warrington player, who was the chief instigator of their demise. He set up three of Salford's opening four tries, kicked four

conversions and added a dropped goal, but took no delight in saying afterwards: "I spent seven seasons at Warrington, but never in a side as poor as this one. It is sad the way their form has dipped."

Warrington contributed to their own downfall, with errors from Jason Roach and Toa Kohe-Love gifting Darren Rogers two early tries.

Salford led 22-4 at the interval, with Crompton's passes enabling Paul Forber and Scott Naylor to use their strength to power over. Warrington's token reply was a try for Kohe-Love from a kick by Lee Briers.

Salford were always in control and added further tries in

the second half from David Bradbury, Gary Broadbent and Hulme, who caught the Warrington defence unawares as he chased Crompton's delicate kick.

To add to Warrington's problems, Adam Fogarty was placed on report for an incident involving Hulme.

SCORES: Warrington Wolves: Tries: Rogers, Roach, Kohe-Love, Salford: Tries: Rogers, Briers, Naylor, Bradbury, Hulme, Broadbent, Goulding, Crompton (4). Goals: Crompton.
WARRINGTON WOLVES: L. Perry, J. Forber, T. Kohe-Love, V. Fawcett, M. Forster, A. Doyle, A. Briers, A. Fogarty, D. Famer, D. Waley, S. McCune, B. Tait, M. Warrington, Substitutes: G. Crompton, G. Cussey, C. Rudd, I. Knott.
SALFORD REDS: G. Broadbent, P. Hession, S. Rogers, M. McGarry, D. Rogers, J. White, M. Crompton, L. Saville, P. Edwards, E. Farrell, D. Bradbury, J. Farrell, D. Hulme, Substitutes: P. Forber, S. Martyn, M. Lee, P. Southern.
Referee: R. Connolly (Wigan).

Wenger catching up on the language fast

Continued from page 31

Someone anonymously sent him a video of the old movie *Catch Us If You Can*, he threw it in the bin. "It's not my fault, none of this is my fault," he said. "Meanwhile, to his dismay, he kept finding four glasses of wine waiting for him at the bar in the evening. "We've had ours," his friends would say, cheerfully, as they put on their coats. "Hope you enjoy yours as much as we did."

And now it was Easter. Just eight matches left (eight thirds are 24). "Everything to play for," he practised saying in front of the mirror. "The psychological advantage is ours."

"Softly, softly, catchee monkey. A stern chase is a long chase. It is idle to swallow the cow and choke on the tail." Clearly, he'd been consulting his Eric Cantona Bumper Book of Obscure Proverbs for

Foreign Sportsmen again. But it gave him no comfort to sound wise and patient at this time. Six thirds were 18, nine thirds were 27, 38 thirds were 114.

And meanwhile he couldn't even achieve parity of breakfast and was obliged to eat out.

"Ketchup with that?" "I beg your pardon?" Wenger broke from his reverie and looked up at the waiter, who was standing beside him.

"Er, ketchup?" "It was the wrong thing to say."

"I am catching up as fast as I can," Wenger said quietly, and left.

"Oh, well," the waiter said, collecting the plate and addressing the remaining customers. "We'll keep it warm for him. I'm sure he won't mind too much if he has it another time."

SNOOKER: WORLD CHAMPION REACHES SEMI-FINALS OF BRITISH OPEN

Doherty runs into form at right time

By Phil Yates

a deciding-frame finish, and the Liverpool Victoria Charity Challenge.

Doherty, who will now play either Hendry or John Parrott, said: "I played pretty solidly, though I know it's going to get harder from now on. Even though I haven't won a major title, this has probably been one of my most consistent seasons ever. I realise the players who will be left are going to be tough to beat but, for a change, so am I."

A well-crafted break of 74 got Doherty off on the right foot and Foulds, appearing in his first quarter-final since the International Open of February 1994, never seriously threatened his dominance.

Efficient rather than spectacular, Doherty retained his early fluency with additional contributions of 51, 50, 57 and,

to close a one-sided encounter, 77.

John Higgins is also enjoying a consistent season and he reached yet another semi-final by overcoming the stubborn challenge of Gary Potts, the world No 85.

Although not at his best, the Scot recovered from a 4-3 deficit to edge through 5-4. A break of 53 in the first frame enabled Potts, who was making his debut in the last eight of a ranking event, to settle early nerves. When he cleared from the last red he began to look to be a distinct possibility.

"It was just as well I didn't bump into anyone at the interval," Higgins said. "I was really fuming." Higgins, who lost 9-4 to Potts in the second round of the United

Kingdom championship in November, added: "I couldn't get what happened in Preston off my mind."

Higgins, the winner of the German Open and Liverpool Victoria Charity Challenge this season, is nothing if not determined and rallied to 3-3 with breaks of 40 and 48 — but Potts stood firm.

When Higgins had the misfortune to pot two reds in splitting the pack off the blue, Potts regained the lead at 4-3 with a break of 65. Once more, the world No 2 was under pressure. Tactically superior in the eighth frame, Higgins forced a decision, which he won with a break of 101 that was launched by a fluke.

"It was a lucky break, but I still had to pot the rest of the balls," Higgins said. His next opponent will be either Ronnie O'Sullivan or Mark Williams, the title-holder.

SPORT IN BRIEF

Sri Lanka crumble for third one-day defeat

CRICKET: Pakistan scored an easy 110-run victory over Sri Lanka in a one-day match in Paarl to move closer to a place in the final of the triangular tournament, against South Africa, the host nation. Sri Lanka, the World Cup-holders, were dismissed for only 139 from 34.2 overs for their third successive defeat in the competition. They must now win their three remaining matches to have any chance of reaching the final. Pakistan and South Africa each have two wins.

Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis set Pakistan on course for victory, reducing Sri Lanka to 54 for four by the twelfth over. Aravinda de Silva top-scored with 31, but was bowled by Abdul Razzaq.

Earlier, Pakistan had made 250, blazing their way to 92 in their first 15 overs. Muttiah Muralitharan, the off-spinner, was largely responsible for a mid-innings collapse in which four wickets fell in seven overs, but Ijaz Ahmed, playing in his 200th one-day international, scored a stylish 65 and received substantial support from the lower-order batsmen. Rashid Latif made 36, Wasim Akram 22 and Razzaq 22.

Raymond stages revival

TENNIS: Lisa Raymond battled back from 5-0 deficit in the first set to defeat Monica Seles, the No 3 seed, 7-6, 6-4 in the third round of the Bausch and Lomb championships at Amelia Island, Florida. Raymond, who won NCAA championships in 1992 and 1993 for the nearby University of Florida, felt that she benefited from the crowd's support. "The crowd really helped, they were awesome, especially when I was down 5-0 in the first set," she said.

Seles was the first player among the top eight seeds to be eliminated. Amanda Coetzer of South Africa, the No 2 seed, beat Magui Serna, of Spain, 6-3, 6-3 and Iva Majoli, of Croatia, the No 5 seed, had an easy 6-4, 6-1 victory over Jennifer Capriati.

Tate dies in road crash

BOXING: John Tate, pictured right, the former World Boxing Association heavyweight champion, was killed instantly when his pickup truck crashed into a pole in Knoxville, Tennessee. He was 43. The accident occurred less than a mile from the old Iyem Gilmour training camp that Tate used after he won the title with a points decision over Gerrie Coetzee, of South Africa, in Pretoria on October 20, 1979.



No fun for Fogarty

MOTOR CYCLING: Carl Fogarty, of Great Britain, the joint leader in the world superbike championship, competes in the third round at Donington Park this weekend. He claimed yesterday that racing in England should not be held so early in the year because of the climate. "The weather forecast does not sound too good — it would have been far better to have had the races in the summer," Fogarty, a former world champion, who rides a Ducati, said. Qualifying takes place today and tomorrow, with the race on Monday.

Coin curls Scotland's way

CURLING: The toss of a coin took David Smith's Scotland side to the semi-finals of the world championships in Kamloops, Canada, yesterday. Scotland beat Sweden, the holders, 4-1, and lost to Canada 5-6 on the final day of the round-robin stage of the tournament to finish in a tie for third place with Finland and Norway. Scotland will meet Sweden in the first semi-final, while Finland face Norway in a tie-break for the right to take on Canada. Scotland's success against Sweden hinged on the second end, when Warwick Smith set up a two-shot take.

Tomba ponders future

SKIING: Alberto Tomba said in Tokyo yesterday that he would take a few weeks before deciding whether or not to retire. Tomba, 31, won the last slalom race of the season in Crans Montana, Switzerland — his fifth World Cup victory. "If I had lost in the race, it would be easy for me to decide on retiring," he said, "but because I won, I am not yet able to reach a conclusion."



Black breezes through

TENNIS: Byron Black, of Zimbabwe, knocked out Gianluca Pozzi, the No 7 seed from Italy, 6-4, 6-0 to advance to the semi-finals of the Salem Open in Hong Kong. Black, ranked No 81 in the world, was in devastating form against the Pozzi, ranked No 70. Thomas Johansson, the No 3 seed from Sweden, joined him in the last four after struggling to a 7-6, 7-5 victory over Sandon Stolle, of Australia. Kenneth Carlsen, the No 8 seed from Denmark, had an easier time in his quarter-final, beating Neville Godwin, a qualifier from South Africa, 7-5, 6-1.

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empire

Conditions keep field close and only ten break par after first round at Augusta

Faldo returns to leading bunch

FROM JOHN HOPKINS, GOLF CORRESPONDENT IN AUGUSTA

AFTER the tumultuous events of the first round of the Masters, when a gusting wind sent scores soaring and only ten men from a field of 88 could break par, it was hardly possible that such difficulties could be posed once again to many of the world's best golfers.

Yet, on another clear but cold day, when a biting, swirling wind was once again present, the signs from the early starters in the second round at Augusta National suggested that what had been so difficult on Thursday was not much easier on Friday.

The wind had taken some distinguished hostages in the first round, men such as Tom Watson (78), Tom Lehman (80), Severiano Ballesteros (78), Costantino Rocca (81), Ben Crenshaw (83) and Ignacio Garrido (85). Yet it also meant that the field was bunched together.

More than half the players were within five strokes of Fred Couples, the leader and the only man to score in the 60s. "I feel I should play well here," Couples, the 1992 champion, said after his 69. "This is my favourite tournament on my favourite course and I have a lot of confidence here."

Only Matt Kuchar, the US Amateur champion, 19, held Augusta National in such high regard as Couples. Kuchar had a storybook first round when, playing alongside Tiger Woods, he outscored the champion for 15 holes until he hit his ball into the water on both the 15th and 16th. Still, his 72, level par, kept him in the hunt, even if Woods did beat him by one stroke in the end.

"Playing with Matt today reminds you of what it's like to go around all day with a smile on your face and to have no pressure on you," Woods said. "He did great. But for those two balls in the water, he could have been leading the tournament."

As Lehman, the 1996 Open champion, strove to reduce the 11-stroke gap that existed between him and Couples, he at least began to master the inward nine holes which had proved so tiresome to him in the first round. For a moment, Ballesteros may have thought that his luck was changing, too. He eagled the long 2nd hole, at which point he was back to four over par.

Ballesteros still looks very frail, though still prone to hit

drives wildly off line, and five more shots were dropped on his way to the turn. Behind him, Ernie Els was another to eagle the 2nd but, just like Ballesteros, Els was unable to build on this and he promptly bogeyed the 3rd, one of the most difficult par-fours in all golf, and then the equally difficult 4th hole as well.

So far, this has been a trying week for Els, who had been one of the ten players not to complete their first rounds on Thursday night and thus had to return yesterday morning. When he did so, he three-putted the 18th for a 75 and he went to a quiet place near the clubhouse to be by himself and try and gather his thoughts.

Thursday had been a day of seesaw scores, one of the most unusual days at a Masters for many a long day. Montgomerie, for instance, had seven birdies in his 71, more birdies than anyone in the field, and came off the 18th feeling as if he had manufactured a good score against the odds.

He had negotiated his way around one of the most difficult courses in the world without the help of Alastair McLean, his caddy for nearly seven years, who had returned to Scotland earlier in the week to have an operation on his back. In McLean's place, Montgomerie was using Joe Collins, a local caddy.

On the 14th and again on the 16th, Montgomerie sank long curling putts, the second one in particular seeming to veer almost at right angles before it fell into the hole.

"Who takes the credit for those putts on the 14 and 16th? You or your caddy?" Montgomerie was asked. "I do," Montgomerie replied. "I read the one at 14 and I have had that one at 16 before."

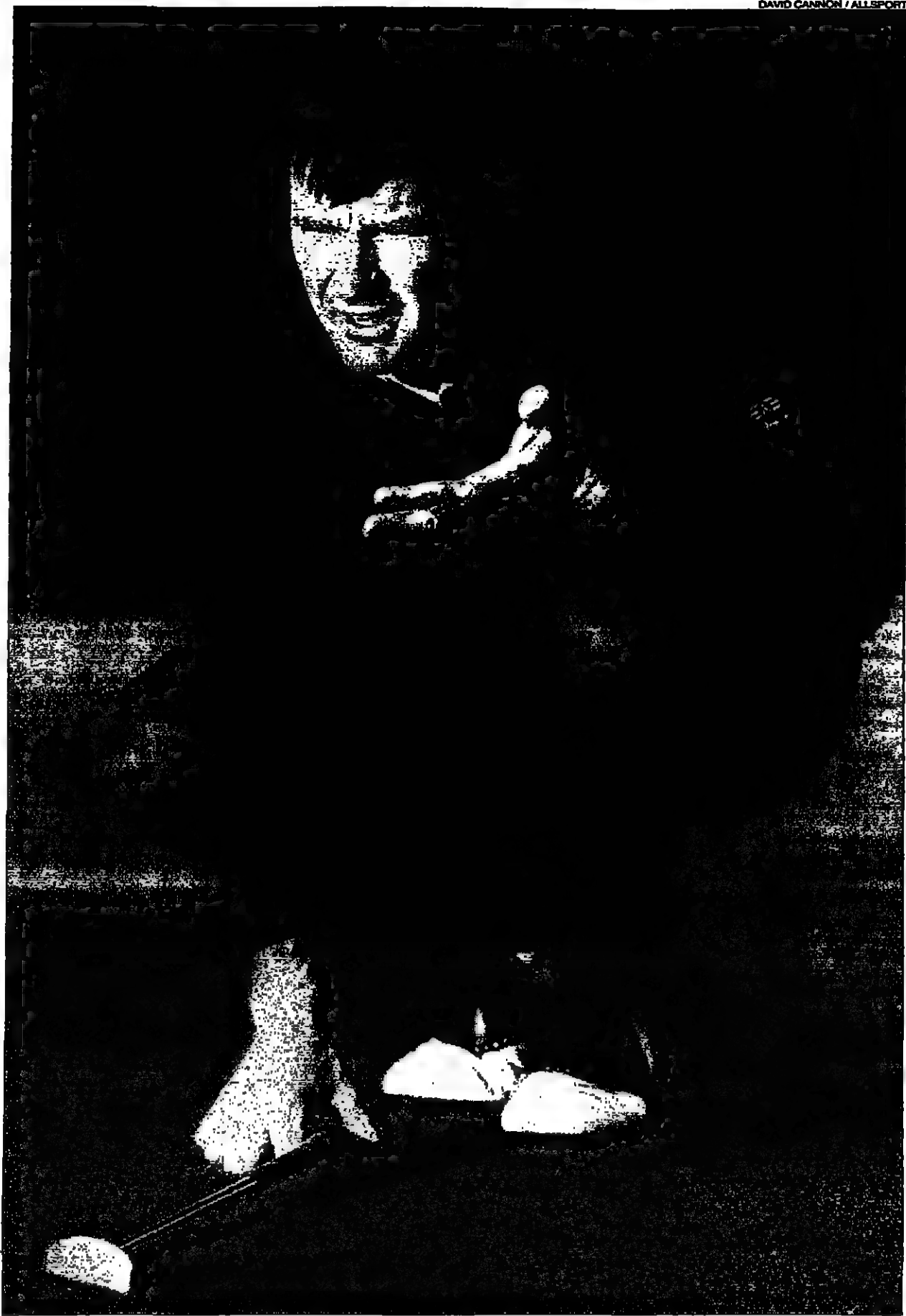
Good putting brought Nick Faldo right into contention after he had marked his ball on the 17th green on Thursday night and returned to complete his round at 7.30 yesterday morning. At the Players Championship two weeks ago, Faldo had declared his game was beginning to come together and he reiterated it during the early part of last week.

When he was three over par after eight holes in his first round, there did not seem to be much sign of a revival in the fortunes of the 1996 champion. But he sank a good putt on the 15th and another good one on the 16th.

"The last two times the pin has been in that position on the 16th, I've taken a four and a five," Faldo said. "So you can guess how pleased I was with a two."

When Faldo faced a six-foot putt on the 17th in the near-darkness of Thursday night, he decided to call it a day. "It was cold, dark and windy," he said. "I thought I'd rather leave it until the morning."

One reason for doing that was that he could hit 50 six-foot putts in practice, which is precisely what he did, and then, as if to show that practice does pay off, he sank the six-footer for his third birdie in a row.



Faldo studies a putt on the 18th green yesterday having resumed his opening round after an overnight break

Zoeller shares tee with Woods in twist of fate

John Hopkins witnesses something of an unholy trinity for the second 18 holes

OF ALL the possible pairings for the second round, the one that the organisers did not want, Tiger Woods did not want and Fuzzy Zoeller did not want actually came to pass. They were paired with one another. Wouldn't you know it? Didn't someone named Sod say something about things like this happening?

Think of the pairings that would have been interesting yesterday. Ignacio Garrido and Tom Lehman, who faced each other in the singles at last year's Ryder Cup. Putting Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus together would have had every spectator over 55 rushing to follow them around the course. Severiano Ballesteros and Tom Kite, last year's Ryder Cup captains, side by side on the same fairways once again.

Instead, Woods, the first native American to win here, had to play with Zoeller, the man who made an insensitive racial remark after Woods's victory last year. "No problem," Woods said when the possibility of him playing with Zoeller was raised on Thursday evening. "It's just another pairing." The trouble was, it was anything but.

It was "anything but" because of Zoeller's remarks when he first praised Woods's skills and then made what was considered to be a racist comment about Woods's selection of food at the champion's dinner this year. He used the word "they" in reference to blacks in a way that was seen by Woods and many others to be sneering and disrespectful.

All the television networks had their cameras trained on Zoeller as he spoke, but declined to use the footage containing his remarks on the grounds that he was just joking, just being Fuzzy, the good of boy. It was only one week later, when an editor at CNN was spooling through old footage and came across this piece of film and decided to broadcast it that Zoeller's troubles began.

Two of Zoeller's sponsors cancelled contracts, costing him an estimated \$1 million. Many non-whites in the Uni-

ted States (and many whites for that matter) were shocked by Zoeller's comment. Woods held his head high, as men tend to do when they feel they have been wronged. Zoeller apologised to a hurt Woods, who was slow to accept it. After a time, a sort of peace broke out.

And there it remained until television began its previews of this year's Masters and Zoeller's remarks were raised with Woods again. To the written media, Woods said: "It's done. It's a dead issue. We've talked about it. It's one of those situations that it's sad it did happen but it's over with and we've all moved on."

When Jimmy Roberts, on ESPN, an authoritative television network, asked if time had healed the wounds, Woods replied: "Heal? I don't think that's the word. Understand? Yes. Forgive? Yes. Forget? No."

A further twist was given to the story yesterday. Anxious to make sure that all competitors finished their second round on time, tournament officials decided to send them out in three-balls, not the normal two-balls, the first time that this has happened since the third round in 1983. So into the potentially explosive pairing of Woods and Zoeller was added... Colin Montgomerie, hardly the most placid customer who ever ventured out on to a golf course.

This was the worst thing that could have happened to Montgomerie, who is under pressure to find his best form. He is notoriously fidgety and prone to the slightest distraction when his game is not at its highest pitch.

In the second round of last year's US Open, for example, Montgomerie was twice involved in verbal exchanges with spectators. Perhaps as a result of such exchanges, he had a 76, having started with a 65.

Fuzzy, Monty and Tiger. It sounds like three animals in a zoo. It was not only the officials at Augusta National who were hoping there would be no zoo-like behaviour in the second round.



Montgomerie, left, and Zoeller went out with Woods, the champion, in the second round



COMPLETE FIRST-ROUND SCORES FROM AUGUSTA

United States unless stated

- 66: F Couples
- 70: J M Ocaszabal (Sp), S Hoch, P Stanekowski
- 71: P Ashner, F Zoeller, P Blackmer, T Woods, C Montgomerie (GB), D Duval
- 72: G Brewer, J Haas, D Browne, J Maggert, M Kuchar, N Faldo (GB), D Frost (SA)
- 73: C Pavin, S McCann, B Faxon, T Kite, L Mize, M Bradley, J Nicklaus
- 74: W Wood, R Twy, J Kribel, R Floyd, S Cink, A Magee, A Lyle (GB), P-U Johansson (Swe), M O'Meara, R Gosslen (SA), M Calcavecchia, L Westwood (GB), D Love, I Woosnam, J Leonard, P Nickelson, S Maruyama (Japan)



- 75: D Toms, T Toller, W Andrade, B Hughes (Aus), S Elkington (Aus), J Ozaki (Japan), B Langer (Ger), J Pernarvik (Swe), N Price (Zim), E Els (SA), S Jones, J Cook
- 76: W R Brown, W Mayfair, D Clarke (GB), J Furyk, T Heron, L

- Jensen, G Norman (Aus), V Singh (FI)
- 77: D Ogrin, G Player (SA), J Huston, S Appleby (Aus), J Daly, F Nobilo (NZ)
- 78: T Watson, S Ballesteros (Sp), J Siurman
- 79: C Coody, F Funk, A Palmer, G Hjertstedt (Swe), C Watson (GB), C Stadler, B Simpson
- 80: T Clark (SA), T Lehman
- 81: W Casper, T Aaron, C Rocca (It)
- 82: K Bakst, W Glasson, M Brooks
- 83: B Crenshaw
- 84: I Garrido (Sp)
- 85: D Ford

* denotes amateur
TELEVISION: Today: Live coverage on BBC2 from 8.10pm. Tomorrow: Live coverage on BBC2 from 8.30pm.



Els took time to recover after trying first round

Young hopefuls being starved of cash and encouragement

The name of Leslie Cox will not strike many chords, but he was a big cheese in junior golf in Gloucestershire nearly 40 years ago. Indeed, without him, there might not have been a county junior side and John Bloxham might not have gone on to represent England, nor Keith Irwin to get a Blue, nor Philip Mawson to become the professional at Bristol and Clifton, where he remains to this day.

I grew up at Stinchcombe Hill, where the wind comes whistling over the last escarpment before the Cotswolds tumble down to the Severn plain. The club's junior section was run by Bob Grif-

fiths, a local teacher. There were about a dozen of us, at most, and when the annual championship came round, he insisted on single sex pairings, fearing hanky panky in the grass bunkers on the 9th.

Despite such deprivations, two recent events have made me realise that to be a junior golfer in the early Sixties was more fulfilling than it is in the Nineties. The sort of care and attention I and my young friends received from Cox is not now available at hundreds of clubs throughout Great Britain and Ireland. Progress, what progress?

A recent issue of *Golf World* contains the results of

a survey that included some questions about junior golf. "Is enough being done to recruit youngsters to the sport?" was one question. "Does your club do a good job in encouraging youngsters?" was another. More than 80 per cent of those who responded said "no" to each one.

Many clubs have little or no regard for juniors. No wonder the average age of the British golfer has risen from 41 to 45 since 1990. In the same time, the percentage of golfers over 55 has risen by nearly half and the number of those under 25 has dropped 30 per cent.

The honourable exceptions

to the general rule include The Daihatsu Junior Golf Tour, in association with *The Times*. Nick Faldo recently launched a junior series to nurture young champions of the 21st century. Perhaps the most successful and, in some ways, least heralded, is the Golf Foundation, the national body for the development of junior golf in Great Britain and Ireland. Since it was founded in 1952, players such as Brian Barnes, Peter Oosterhuis, Mickey Walker, Bernard Gallacher, now the president, Darren Clarke and Lee Westwood have either

had lessons under its auspices or competed in its competitions. The Foundation's latest attempt to reach more juniors is a £1.5 million drive to set up starter centres where they can be coached by PGA members.

Is this enough? It is a start, but that is all and, if you do not agree with me, then perhaps you will believe the respondents to the *Golf World* survey. "Would you be prepared to pay a yearly levy of say £5 towards supporting junior golf?" was another question the magazine's readers were asked.

Nearly 80 per cent of those polled responded in the affirmative.

The Foundation has supported junior golf for more than 40 years and each year awards a prize to the club that donates the largest sum of money to its appeal. You would think that all the 2,329 golf facilities in the United Kingdom would support such a worthy cause. In fact, fewer than 1,000 contributed last year. Royal Birkdale, which will host this year's Open, gave £128; Royal Troon, where the Open was held last year, £100; Royal Lytham and St Annes gave £330. Sunningdale, where the side bets in any four-ball are


likely to exceed the average monthly wage, did not donate a penny. Nor did Carnoustie, where the Open is going in 1999.

As the average age of golfers has risen, so their interest in juniors has declined. This is borne out by the way the sum donated to the Foundation's annual appeal has fallen - from £93,032 in 1993 to £75,789 in 1994 and £56,165 in 1996. You can hear the members saying one to another: "We're alright, aren't we? We can still have our midweek match, 50p on the front nine, 50p on the back nine and £1 on the match and be home in time for tea. Juniors? Yes, we

applaud them. Jolly good idea. They're the future of the club. But they must not hold us up on the course, take our tee-times or clutter up the clubhouse."


Who will suffer as the members become too old to continue to run the affairs of their clubs? The clubs themselves. When the supply of young blood dries up, the clubs that are so stinking now will be in a parlous state. They might be able to manage in 1998, but they will be in trouble in 2008. And they will have no one to blame but themselves. Serve them right, I say.

JOHN HOPKINS



IT'S NOT SO MUCH WHICH BALL THE PRO'S PLAY AT THE MASTERS. IT'S WHICH TITLEIST.

The Masters at Augusta National. So much golf to be played, so many questions to be answered. Will Tiger triumph again? Maybe Monty's arm has healed? How will the intense Westwood fare? We can speculate all we like, but for now there's only one result that's cut and dried. Once again Titleist is the overwhelming choice of the world's top players as they strive for the coveted green jacket. What's more, a win for one of the many Titleist players will bring us our eighth Major win on the spin-Solheim battle countenance. And may the best ball win.



FOOTBALL SATURDAY

Kevin McCarra on a match that may decide the destiny of the Scottish championship

Celtic learn to bear burden of expectation

Wim Jansen was at his most animated yesterday when discussing Kaiserslautern's bizarre inability to polish off Borussia Dortmund in this week's 1-1 draw in the Bundesliga. The Celtic head coach's update on his satellite viewing was disconcerting, given that his team faces a crucial match with Rangers at Ibrox tomorrow.

His apparent indifference to Old Firm rivalry might be attributed to a foreigner's detachment, but he may also have been relishing the bracing effect of the past few days. Last Sunday, Celtic were knocked out of the Tennents Scottish Cup by Rangers, but that reverse was followed by a demonstration of robust morale that would have cheered any manager.

At Kilmarnock, Jansen's side repelled accusations of tiredness and frail temperament by forcing themselves to a 2-1 victory at a venue that has often been the burial ground of their hopes. With

that result, their three-point lead over Rangers in the Bell's Scottish League premier division was re-established.

Celtic have not held such an advantage in the approach to the final Old Firm fixture since they last won the title in 1988. Mood, however, is never



Smith: approaching final weeks in charge at Ibrox

entirely explained by logic. Rangers, with just as much sense, can see the match tomorrow on their own ground as an inviting opportunity to pull level with their great rivals.

It may be that Celtic are encouraged because they proved to themselves at Rugby Park that they are capable of performing well while shouldering the burdens of expectation that come with leadership of the premier division. "The result gave the players a lot of confidence in the way we play," Jansen said. It is a style that would once have been thought alien to the club.

Although they cannot be accused of outright defensiveness, Celtic are conservative and Jansen much prefers prudence to adventure. His side has functioned well when acting with restraint. Celtic have taken half of their points in away fixtures, perhaps benefiting on those occasions from the absence of a fevered crowd urging them to recklessness.

Jansen should be able to pick his favoured defence at Ibrox. Minor injuries are expected to clear in time, allowing Alan Stubbs and Jackie McNamara to return to the squad. Tom Boyd and Enrico Annoni will probably also recover from knocks

collected at Rugby Park. An extensive pool, however, will do nothing to reduce the tension.

Heart of Midlothian, four points behind Celtic, are still contenders for the title, but no supporter of the Old Firm clubs will be able to spare a

thought for the Edinburgh side's derby match with Hibernian at Easter Road this afternoon. On a professional basis, several figures at Ibrox will be emotionally entangled with the match against Celtic for the last time.

Walter Smith stands down as manager at the end of the season and veteran players such as Ally McCoist and Andy Gorman are not expected to be part of the new regime that will be instituted when Dick Advocaat takes over in the summer. In recent weeks, the old guard at Ibrox have seemed determined that the poignancy of the closing weeks of their time at Ibrox should not be allowed to deteriorate into sadness.

The season has been a ramshackle affair for Rangers, with injuries, loss of form, the speculation over Brian Laudrup's departure and the sale of Paul Gascoigne creating an air of chaos. In recent weeks, though, order has been restored. The 3-0 victory over Hibernian ten days ago saw the club win a third

successive league match for the first time this season.

"We knew that we had to go out and win the games that were left," Smith said, "and there has been a good response from the players. Now we need a performance like the one we produced at Celtic



Jansen: putting prudence before sense of adventure

Park in the second half last week, although it would be better if it lasted a bit longer than that." The cup-tie comforted Rangers by demonstrating that their old authority remains.

Gorman and McCoist slipped into familiar roles, the goalkeeper infuriating Celtic with an adamant performance and the forward giving his team the lead. Lorenzo Amoroso made his first appearance for Rangers, as a substitute, and should start the game tomorrow. Sergio Porrini is ruled out by injury.

After the Old Firm match, Celtic have three of their last four fixtures at home while Rangers face a gruelling programme. Defeat at Ibrox would not be disastrous for Jansen's team, but the players know that they have the opportunity to land a decisive blow in the championship. To do so, Celtic will have to prove that they now possess the knack of winning the key contest. It is a feat that has been the exclusive property of Rangers since 1988.

RACE FOR THE TITLE										
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts			
CELTIC	31	20	6	5	57	20	66			
RANGERS	31	18	7	6	69	35	63			
HEARTS	31	18	9	4	64	28	62			

REMAINING FIXTURES										
CELTIC					RANGERS					
Tomorrow	v Rangers (A)	Tomorrow	v Celtic (H)		Tomorrow	v Celtic (H)				
April 18	v Motherwell (H)	April 19	v Aberdeen (A)		April 19	v Aberdeen (A)				
April 25	v Hibernian (H)	April 25	v Hearts (A)		April 25	v Hearts (A)				
May 3	v Dunfermline (A)	May 2	v Kilmarnock (H)		May 2	v Kilmarnock (H)				
May 9	v St Johnstone (H)	May 9	v Dundee (H)		May 9	v Dundee (H)				

HEARTS										
Today	v Hibernian (A)	April 25	v Rangers (H)		April 25	v Rangers (H)				
April 18	v St Johnstone (H)	May 2	v Aberdeen (A)		May 2	v Aberdeen (A)				
		May 9	v Dunfermline (H)		May 9	v Dunfermline (H)				

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE: TOP-TWO PLACE COMES INTO FOCUS FOR CURBISHLEY WHILE BURNS RUES READING'S LENGTHENING INJURY LIST

Charlton maintain automatic pressure

Charlton Athletic 3
Reading 0

By RUSSELL KEMPSON

GOOD Friday for Charlton Athletic, black Friday for Reading. As Charlton as good as qualified for the Nationwide League first division play-offs and simultaneously edged towards an automatic promotion place, Reading further contemplated the probability of life in the second division next season.

Few games in April are without such mixed emotions, when the high and mighty make a last push for honours and the low and slow scramble desperately to retain their status. It often makes for poor viewing, a sorry spectacle

blinkered members of his profession and so told it as it was: "When you're near the bottom of the league, those sort of things tend to happen. When you're at the top, most things seem to go your way."

"Nobody's been talking about the play-offs here or automatic promotion, but I suppose, if we win all our remaining games, then we might have a shout of going straight up. We're on a bit of a roll."

Charlton, with four successive wins behind them, went ahead in the sixth minute from a huge clearance by Ilic, their goalkeeper. Reading's makeshift defence of Bernal, Parkinson and Gray — two midfield players and a full back — failed to cope with it and Mendonca guided in his 22nd goal of the season.

Reading lost Legg, with a hamstring strain and could have equalised passes with Fleck, only to see his shot blocked by Ilic. However, with McIntyre limping after sustaining a knee injury, their fortunes dipped again in the 43rd minute.

Mills clearly slipped in the mud under Caskey's challenge, but Plester strangely ruled that Caskey had fouled him. Mortimer stepped up and curled a delightful free kick past Howie, further compounding the referee's error.

Reading reorganised again during half-time, switching to a more reliable 4-4-2 formation from their earlier 3-6-1 and 3-5-2 systems. It worked well for a time, with Ilic having to block efforts from Lambert and Crawford, but Charlton slowly regained control in a manner more in keeping with their aspirations.

Twelve minutes from the end, they flattened the scoreline with a third goal when Newton escaped along the right flank and crossed to the near post for Bright, a substitute, to nod firmly past Howie. Unless they fail to pick up another point and Birmingham City win their remaining five matches by unrealistic margins, Charlton are in the play-offs.

Plans are already in hand to raise the roof of the West Stand to accommodate 4,000 extra supporters in the ground. The Valley will be ready for the Premiership. Quite what fare the Reading fans will be watching next season, when the club moves to its new, £37 million, 25,000-capacity Madejski Stadium, is a different matter.

CHARLTON ATHLETIC (4-4-2): S. Ilic — D. Mills, R. Pugh, E. Younis, A. Barnes — S. Newton, M. Konecny (sub: S. Brown, 60min), K. Jones, P. Mortimer (sub: M. Huggins, 74), S. Jones (sub: M. Bright, 74), C. Mendonca. READING (3-6-1): S. Howie — A. Bernal, P. Parkinson, S. Gray — R. Black (sub: T. Morley, 70), J. Crawford, D. Caskey, M. O'Neill, J. Lambert, A. Legg (sub: M. Aspin, 12) — J. McIntyre (sub: P. Brayson, 45). Referee: M. Pearce.



Mendonca, No 10, celebrates scoring the opening goal with a Charlton team-mate at The Valley yesterday

Ward puts the champagne on ice

By RICHARD HOBSON

BRISTOL CITY will delay celebrating promotion from the Nationwide League second division until the end of the Bank Holiday. By then, they may have secured the title too.

Grimsby Town's failure to beat Wycombe Wanderers yesterday guaranteed City a top two finish little more than a year since John Ward took over as manager.

City were preparing for today's game at Burnley when the 1-1 result came through from Adams Park. If Watford lose to Wrexham this afternoon, then City will seal the championship with victories against Burnley and then Watford, their closest rivals.

On Easter Monday, alternatively, Watford will move to within a point of promotion if they beat Wrexham.

City directors have budgeted for a turnover of £5 million next season. However, it is unlikely that any of that

money will be spent on buying Jason Roberts, a striker on loan from Wolverhampton Wanderers. Roberts left for an international tournament for Grenada without permission yesterday.

Regardless of what happens over the next three days, Watford seem certain to join City in the first division next season. They have a nine-point lead over third-placed Grimsby with a game in hand.

Paul Gascoigne could make his return for Middlesbrough in the first division fixture away to Reading on Monday with Viv Anderson, the assistant manager, dismissing suggestions that the England midfielder's lack of fitness will force him to miss the World Cup. "He could have done without the week off, but France will not be a problem," Anderson said.

Gascoigne has been ruled out of the game against Bury at the Riverside Stadium this afternoon because of a bruised foot. Should Middlesbrough succeed, then Bryan Robson may decide to hold back Gascoigne, particularly as he is yet to successfully assimilate Hamilton Ricard, the Colombia striker, into the team at a time when familiarity counts for so much.

Like Gascoigne, Alan Durban has little time to adjust to a new role. Appointed caretaker-manager of Stoke City on Wednesday, he has five games to level the club out of the bottom three. Stoke entertain Portsmouth, just two places above them, this afternoon.

"We have to repeat our form of earlier in the season, which means removing the fear factor and playing with confidence," Durban said. "I put

out a strong reserve side against Aston Villa this week to try a few things out and while it was a bit risky, because we could have picked up injuries, it turned out to be a very useful exercise."

Swindon Town, who led the table in November, will honour a pledge to refund season ticket-holders after failing to secure a place in the play-offs. Those who renewed tickets before the start of the season will receive £20 each, costing the club £50,000. It remains to be seen whether Swindon are confident enough to repeat the offer.

Doncaster Rovers will lose their league status this afternoon if they lose at Chester City while Hull City take a point from their home game against Hartlepool. Even a draw will be insufficient should Hull win and Brighton beat Notts County, the champions.

Too little too late for tired Grimsby

Wycombe Wanderers ... 1
Grimsby Town ... 1

By PAT GIBSON

A LAST-MINUTE equaliser by Jack Lester gave Grimsby Town the point that they deserved to keep them on course for the play-offs, but it was Bristol City who were celebrating last night because this result guarantees them promotion in the Nationwide League first division.

Watford will be almost certain to go up with them if they beat Wrexham at Vicarage Road today, leaving third-placed Grimsby to rue an untimely loss of form that has seen them take three points from their past five games.

Grimsby's consolation is that they seem sure to be in the play-offs, since they are seven points clear of Gillingham in seventh place. They have never been to Wembley, but they have a chance of getting there twice this season with their place in the Auto Windscreens Trophy final against Bournemouth already booked for a week on Sunday.

They also reached the fourth round of both the Coca-Cola Cup and the FA Cup and such success takes its toll on a club with limited resources. This was their sixtieth match of the season and it showed against a physical Wycombe Wanderers side that snatched an early goal and then defended in increasing numbers.

Grimsby, by common consent the best footballing side in the second division, made a bright start, but their defence looked lethargic when Keith Scott was left completely unmarked to head in the second of two corners from the right by Dave Carroll.

Grimsby also lacked sharpness in front of goal. Some of their passing was superb, but they did not create too many clear openings. When they did, Lester twice had his legs taken from under him, but, on each occasion, an inconsistent referee waved aside Grimsby's penalty claims.

It looked as though Grimsby were running out of steam when first Stallard and then Scott had shots saved by Davison in Wycombe break-aways. Then, with just a minute remaining, Grimsby drew level.

Lester played a long ball out of defence to set Donovan free on the right and his cross bounced perfectly for Lester to volley past Taylor and high into the net.

"It would have been a travesty if we had lost," Alan Buckley, the Grimsby manager, said. "We dominated 75 per cent of the game, our passing and movement were really good and I thought we played really well against the 14 men of Wycombe." It was an obvious reference to the referee and his linesmen.

WYCOMBE WANDERERS (5-3-3): M. Taylor, J. Kavanagh, K. Ryan, J. Cousins, H. Pritchard, A. Beaton, D. Carroll, S. Brown, M. Harkin, K. Scott, M. Stallard. GRIMSBY TOWN (4-4-2): A. Davison, M. McDonald, P. Hinchey, M. Lester, T. Gellman (sub: R. Black, 75min), K. Donohue, W. Burnett, P. Groves, D. Smith, L. Nagan, J. Lester. Referee: P. D'Uva.

Play-off place in reach of Rovers

Bristol Rovers 5
Wigan Athletic 0

By NICK SZCZEPANIK

"THEY'VE got to win," a charity collector outside the Memorial Ground said before the kick-off. With five games to go and Bristol Rovers the same number of points behind the Nationwide League second-division play-off places, that hardly needed saying, but a determined display in the opening 45 minutes laid the foundations for the first of the five victories that many feel are necessary for Rovers to extend their season.

Wigan Athletic, who have pulled themselves together after late looking likely to return to the third division, of which they were champions last season, could have been tricky opponents, especially in view of the match between these teams in December, when Rovers finished with seven men after a flurry of red cards.

However, with Ian Holloway, the Rovers player-manager, driving his team forward after restoring himself to midfield, and Barry Hayles, the top scorer, in electric form, the first half was one-sided in the extreme.

After a number of near-misses, it was no surprise when Holloway and Hayles combined to give Rovers the lead after 24 minutes. Hayles was left with the simple task of rolling home a loose ball for his twentieth goal of the season after Carroll, the Wigan goalkeeper, had lost Holloway's corner.

If the first goal was scrappy, the second is unlikely to be bettered in any division this weekend. Ramasut, something of a specialist from long range, was given all the space he needed to hit a superb angled 30-yarder that arched across Carroll into the far corner.

Hayles could have added two more, but instead Beadle, his striking partner, clearly felt it was his turn to take the spotlight, squeezing a rebound between Carroll and his near post in first-half stoppage time. Anyone feeling Rovers might settle for a three-goal advantage had their answer soon after the restart when Beadle added another, then completed his hat-trick in the 56th minute after Foster had headed on Holloway's free kick.

Holloway had spoken previously of the "massive weekend" facing his team, while Phil Bate, the coach, had written in the match programme that Rovers were capable of five wins, no matter the opposition.

Even with third-placed Grimsby Town awaiting them at Blundell Park on Monday, it could happen.

BRISTOL ROVERS (4-4-2): L. Jones — D. Pritchard, S. Foster, A. Tilsen, M. Lockwood, Harkin, K. Scott, M. Stallard. GRIMSBY TOWN (4-4-2): A. Davison, M. McDonald, P. Hinchey, M. Lester, T. Gellman (sub: R. Black, 75min), K. Donohue, W. Burnett, P. Groves, D. Smith, L. Nagan, J. Lester. Referee: S. Baines.

£30m deal to keep young United trio

By DAVID MADDOCK AND RICHARD HOBSON

MANCHESTER UNITED are close to securing the long-term futures of three of their brightest young players. Contract negotiations with David Beckham, Paul Scholes and Nicky Butt are said to be at an advanced stage by a senior official at Old Trafford.

The combined six-year deals would cost Manchester United in the region of £30 million. "We are at an advanced stage and it looks like all of them will agree," a senior United source said. If they sign the contracts, Scholes, Butt and Beckham will earn in excess of £20,000 per week.

Savo Milosevic will end his turbulent three-year association with Aston Villa at the end of the season. Milosevic has been the subject of transfer speculation for most of his time at Villa Park and has often expressed his desire to leave.

Now, after holding more talks about his future with John Gregory, it appears that

the Villa manager would not be sorry to see him go. "He said he did not want to stay and that was it for me," Gregory said. "As soon as we can arrange a satisfactory deal for the club, he will be on his bike."

Villa will ask for around £4.2 million for the Yugoslavia striker, a profit of £700,000 on his acquisition from Partizan Belgrade. Udinese, the Italian club, is believed to have made a preliminary inquiry. Milosevic has previously rejected moves to Perugia and Napoli, while Villa turned down an offer of £3 million from Benfica last December.

Meanwhile, Steve Staunton will wait until the end of the season before deciding whether to stay with the club. The Ireland defender will become the best-paid player

at Villa Park if he accepts a new deal, but is available on a free transfer under the Bosman ruling.

Arsenal, who have their sights set on winning the FA Cup this season, have secured a notable double already with Arsene Wenger named as the Carling Manager of the Month and Alex Manninger, their young Austrian goalkeeper, taking the player award for March.

Kasey Keller, the United States goalkeeper, will be offered improved terms by Leicester City. He has a year remaining on his contract, but will delay negotiations for an extension until after the World Cup in France this summer.

Lee Sharpe is hoping to make his comeback for Leeds United in a reserve game later this month. Sharpe has missed the entire season so far after undergoing an operation on cruciate ligaments.

Saviour



Walli flies in

FOOTBALL SATURDAY

Saviour keeps looking up

Southampton, perennial strugglers, have raised their sights a long way in a season under Dave Jones

Dave Jones has rehearsed his favourite anecdote until he has got it off-pat. I heard him relate it a couple of weeks ago after his Southampton side had pushed Newcastle United further into trouble at The Dell. He told it again on *Match of the Day* that night and once more, for good measure, a few days later as he sat in the low-slung pavilion at the club's picturesque training ground on the outskirts of the city.

It is a salutary story, a warning against pessimism and the vulnerability of the meek. Like the man himself, it does not stray into bitterness or excessive self-regard, but it is tinged with just enough resentment and scorn to remind you of the qualities Jones needed to drag Southampton out of their perennially grim battle against relegation.

It tells you, too, that for all the inspiration provided by Matt Le Tissier over the years, all the seasons of papering over the cracks on the South Coast, there is a new saviour in town. This time, the goal goes far beyond just staying up. This time, it is all about moving up and then further up.

"When I came here," Jones says, going into his routine, "I honestly thought that the club wasn't called Southampton. I thought it was called Struggling Southampton because that was all that was ever said about them. And I wanted to change that."

Change it, he has. If Jones and his players beat Wimbledon at The Dell today and Bolton Wanderers and Barnsley both lose, Southampton will have guaranteed themselves another year of FA Carling Premiership football four weeks before the end of the season.

It will seem strange not including them in all the various relegation permutations, the calculations of how many points they need and the dire warnings that if Le Tissier does not perform they are doomed. This year, for once, their supporters will be able to sit back like passengers in a lifeboat as the big ships fight to stay afloat.

And if at first there were many among the critics who mocked the appointment of Jones before the start of the season and asked where the big name was to effect Southampton's salvation, they will be busy eating their words this weekend. Indeed, if there is any justice, the people who decide the manager of the year award should be arguing now about the respective merits of Jones and Gordon Strachan, the Coventry City manager.

The success that Jones, 42, a former Everton player and social worker, has enjoyed has

a significance that goes beyond Southampton. His achievements there should have proved to chairmen that they need not look for big-name foreign coaches to guide them, that there are more where he came from in the Nationwide League, that men like Stan Ternent, of Bury, and Alan Curtisley, of Charlton Athletic, deserve a shot at the big time.

Jones, like Strachan, has done more than just drag an under-achieving club to safety. He has not just patched things up. In less than nine months, the man who took Stockport County from relative obscurity to the first division and the semi-finals of the Coca-Cola Cup has changed the whole philosophy at Southampton, changed the mood and the outlook. The reliance on Le Tissier has gone for a start and it seems suddenly as if anything is possible.

OLIVER HOLT



survival? Why not aim for the top rather than the mentality of finishing fourth from bottom because, if you fall just short of it, then you are out of the Premiership?"

"We were bottom of the table for one week back at the start of the season. I had never been bottom of the league as a player, manager, coach whatever. Even when I played in the Sunday league, I had never been bottom. It was a feeling I didn't like and I didn't want to be there much longer than I was."

"Football is all about confidence and results. The only way that you seem to gain confidence is by winning games and when we got on a little bit of a roll, it just seemed to take off. There is a belief in the camp that they can beat anybody, and I mean anybody, and that is what you should get in any football club, regardless of whether you are Southampton or Man United or whoever. You have to believe that you can beat anybody, or don't go out and play."

At the beginning, it was harder than he expected. Southampton garnered just four points from their first eight games and suddenly everyone was talking about Jones as if he was some sort of silly Scouser who had wandered down from the North and bitten off far more than he could chew. Those people did him a favour. They gave him an even greater incentive to succeed.

Even in the midst of that crisis, Jones did not panic. He waited for the men he needed. He bought David Hirst from



"He may talk softly in a voice loaded with gentle humour, but there is a steel in his soul." Photograph: Marc Aspland

Sheffield Wednesday and he persuaded Carlton Palmer to move south after his purgatory at Leeds United. Paul Jones, the goalkeeper, he brought with him from Stockport, found his feet about that time, too, and suddenly things began to look up.

Jones the manager, of course, had never had any doubts. He may talk softly in a voice loaded with ironies and asides and gentle humour, but there is a steel in his soul that is impossible to miss. There is an intensity and a drive about him, an absolute commitment to success that glimmers at you like a row of silver teeth through his smile.

"I got annoyed at the start of the season when I took over here that so-called experts had decided my future and the club's future and they did not know me. They did not know what I was about or anything. They just assumed that a

manager coming in from Stockport County to Southampton was too big a gamble. But I knew I had a good education and I was given an opportunity that I could not turn down."

"The so-called experts, the muppets off the television, said they would rather watch paint dry than watch Southampton play and that was after about four or five games. I just think

'He has changed the philosophy, the mood and the outlook'

that is crazy. I got a little bit annoyed about that, and I wanted to prove people wrong. They had decided my future virtually before a ball had been kicked. There is a bit more about me than that. I am a fighter and I was always going to hang in there."

"The players here had had five managers in five years, so there was never any continuity. The players needed to get

to know me, I needed to get to know them, how I work, how they work, what I was thinking, what they were thinking, and that just does not happen overnight."

"All I want to do is to prove people wrong by showing that I can manage in the Premiership and that I can hold my own and look after myself. We have the players here to succeed and now we have to get continuity and stability. I want other clubs to think that The Dell is a hard place to come to and not just think they can pick up three easy points along the way. I want Southampton to be a force. That is down to good players and hard work."

And as Jones talks on and refers again and again to his plans for "the football club", he inspires a certainty that, with him at the helm, Southampton can complete an unlikely return to the ranks of the country's leading clubs. There

is a solidity about him, a long-termism that suggests things will get better and better. "We are eleventh now and I want to be tenth," he says. "When we are tenth, I will want to be ninth. It will go on like that."

He is fiercely ambitious, but if he can hang on to players like Le Tissier and Kevin Davies, Jones, Palmer and Egil Ostenstad and acquire a few more besides, then a challenge for a European place next season is not out of the question.

Then, perhaps, he will have acquired the kind of reputation that others once bemoaned he lacked. "I think everybody assumes that when a Premiership job comes available, it is going to go to a big name," Jones says. "Well, I don't know what a big name is. I have maintained all along that if you put my middle name in, it makes 15 letters and if that is not big enough for anybody, then I don't know what they want."

For Dave Jones, the rehearsal is now over and the stage beckons.

Blowing the whistle on a lost sense of humour

Mark Hodgkinson on a double-act helping supporters to smile again

A NEATLY-typed agenda was handed to everyone attending the monthly meeting of the Barnsley Supporters Club. It remained unread, left on chairs or tucked into pockets; everyone knew the night's business anyway.

Barnsley fans are still simmering about the performance of Gary Willard, the referee in charge of the 3-2 home defeat against Liverpool, when three of their players were sent off. While their anger was once naked and hostile, it is now tempered with reason and not a little humour. A shopkeeper in the town has stuck a poster in his window: "Body parts shrunk to order. Premier League referees done free."

The guest speakers on Thursday evening were two FA Carling Premiership referees, Uriah Rennie and Steve Lodge. Since they are from Yorkshire — regional loyalty even runs to a pride in its own referees — and ineligible to referee Barnsley's league games, their reception was more cordial than might have been expected. If the agenda had mentioned one G. Willard from Worthing, however, the beer would have been served in plastic glasses.

"He should not be allowed near Oakwell for a very, very long time — if ever," one fan implored.

"Paul Ince made more decisions than he did," another complained. "The guy was appalling and there is quite clear evidence that we are sick of it," a voice at the back said. Although there is obvious dismay about the sendings-off, the main tenet of supporters' anger is a perceived injustice: "They are frightened to death of booking internationals and all these famous players, frightened to death."

Barnsley on a cold night is some prospect, but compound it with a foaming discontent and a mistrust of anyone on nodding terms with Willard and one might expect a simmering telephone call two hours before the meeting: "This sniffe has turned into quite a bad cold, Mr Chairman..."

Not so. Step forward, Rennie and Lodge. The names have the genial zing of a comedy double act and, when the nefarious world of big-time football has no more use of these men, they should be booked immediately on a theatre tour of Britain's seaside towns.

They arrived resplendent in freshly-pressed blazers and fairly gamboled into the room. Lodge, hair combed forward, looked as if he had been dressed and groomed by his mother for his first day at school. He has the shy, understated demeanour of a schoolboy.

but also that withering stare exclusive to Yorkshiremen. Their mouths stay shut, but the pinched, pained expression says: "That's a pillock, and I probably know it too."

Rennie is all smiles and charm, the Eric Morecambe to Lodge's Ernie Wise. He rolls his shoulders, tosses his head. He praises Barnsley for its good-looking women and asks for more ladies to supply questions. He jokes about his footballing skills: "I was quality. Do you remember Socrates, the Brazilian midfielder? I modelled myself on him."

Only once does the smile leave his face, when he is asked yet again about Willard. "I am not the PR guy for our friends down South," he says. Subject closed.

A supporter had heard a rumour about big clubs and their humm, special relationship with referees. "I've heard that they meet you at the motorway, give you a chauffeur-driven ride to your hotel..."

He wants to list the other wonderful acts of kindness, but is interrupted by Lodge. "Now you'll be saying they give us a little brown envelope next, won't you?" he says. "A big brown envelope would be better." Rennie laughs. "Is that taxable thought?"

Lodge counters.

At this point, supporters' club officials are scanning the top table for the duo's scripts. For the record, Rennie had to make his own cup of tea during a recent visit to Old Trafford, so much for championship hospitality.

Rennie confirmed that managers were sometimes aggressive towards referees when out of sight of the pitch. "They come down the corridor shouting F-words and kicking doors. I tell them to go away and cool down and then come back later. I will not have anyone coming in my dressing room belittling me," he said.

Several Barnsley supporters expressed surprise that Georgi Hristov, their Macedonia striker, had been sent off for swearing against Leeds United last Saturday. "I thought he couldn't speak English," pondered one. An explanation was at hand. "He only knows two words, and the second one is off."

David Mellor, the host of Radio 5 Live's phone-in programme, *Six-O-Six*, was also implicated in the conspiracy theories that have beset Barnsley. "He only let a few people from Barnsley speak after the Liverpool game," one grumbled. "He's a prat," another added.

There is, evidently, a smile back on the face of Barnsley, even if it is a smile in crisis.

LIFE AT THE TOP



his head. He praises Barnsley for its good-looking women and asks for more ladies to supply questions. He jokes about his footballing skills: "I was quality. Do you remember Socrates, the Brazilian midfielder? I modelled myself on him."

Only once does the smile leave his face, when he is asked yet again about Willard. "I am not the PR guy for our friends down South," he says. Subject closed.

A supporter had heard a rumour about big clubs and their humm, special relationship with referees. "I've heard that they meet you at the motorway, give you a chauffeur-driven ride to your hotel..."

He wants to list the other wonderful acts of kindness, but is interrupted by Lodge. "Now you'll be saying they give us a little brown envelope next, won't you?" he says. "A big brown envelope would be better." Rennie laughs. "Is that taxable thought?"

Lodge counters.

At this point, supporters' club officials are scanning the top table for the duo's scripts. For the record, Rennie had to make his own cup of tea during a recent visit to Old Trafford, so much for championship hospitality.

Rennie confirmed that managers were sometimes aggressive towards referees when out of sight of the pitch. "They come down the corridor shouting F-words and kicking doors. I tell them to go away and cool down and then come back later. I will not have anyone coming in my dressing room belittling me," he said.

Several Barnsley supporters expressed surprise that Georgi Hristov, their Macedonia striker, had been sent off for swearing against Leeds United last Saturday. "I thought he couldn't speak English," pondered one. An explanation was at hand. "He only knows two words, and the second one is off."

David Mellor, the host of Radio 5 Live's phone-in programme, *Six-O-Six*, was also implicated in the conspiracy theories that have beset Barnsley. "He only let a few people from Barnsley speak after the Liverpool game," one grumbled. "He's a prat," another added.

There is, evidently, a smile back on the face of Barnsley, even if it is a smile in crisis.

STEVE FORREST / SUZELIAN



Premiership referees Rennie, centre, and Lodge, right, face the music at Barnsley Supporters Club

Vialli flies in the face of continental custom

For Gianluca Vialli, next Thursday will be, if not quite the moment of truth, then one of high significance as Vicenza come to Stamford Bridge holding a 1-0 lead from the first leg of the European Cup Winners' Cup semi-final.

There is little doubt that, in Italy, Chelsea were still feeling the reaction from the 120 minutes that they played the previous Sunday, when they won the Coca-Cola Cup final against Middlesbrough, a success that established Vialli as a winning player-manager. But less than a year ago, so was his predecessor, Ruud Gullit, when Chelsea won the far more resplendent FA Cup, and where is he now?

Both, like Glenn Hoddle before them, have functioned in a double role that is unknown in almost all other leading footballing countries.

Vialli, who won his players' admiration and respect when he stood down from appearing at Wembley last month, got things convincingly right when Chelsea defeated Real Betis, of Spain, both away and at home, in the Cup Winners' Cup quarter-final. In Vicenza, he seemed to be less sure-footed.

It was hard to understand why Gianfranco Zola was exiled to the left wing for so much of the game and not much easier to comprehend why, when Tore Andre Flo ultimately appeared, the quintessential centre forward was used on the right flank.

Vialli, who nearly equalised with a header from a corner, insisted afterwards that Chelsea had dominated the first 20 to 25 minutes, which hardly looked the case from the stand — but then, that is the deluded way of non-playing managers too.

When Vialli was appointed, he was spitefully disparaged by Fabio Capello, the coach of AC Milan's present, ailing team. To Capello, Vialli's appointment was absurd — yet not long ago was he not defending Vialli and attacking Gullit, with whom he fell out in Milan, for leaving Vialli on the bench out of supposed jealousy?

Vialli had every right to answer that, for all Capello's past successes — including the Italian championship with Milan and the Spanish title last season with Real Madrid — he has lost his way embarrassingly this season, even if Milan did beat Lazio 1-0 this week in the first leg of the Italian Cup final.

BRIAN GLANVILLE



Humiliated in recent League games by both Internazionale, their Milanese rivals, and Juventus, they had salt rubbed into their wounds by the way that Edgar Davids shone against them. Only last December, Capello had sold the young Dutchman to Juventus after an unhappy spell with

Milan. By way of unconvincing excuse, Capello alleged that Milan's own physiotherapists had had to repair the damage done to Davids's broken leg by their Dutch counterparts and that Louis van Gaal, the player's former coach at Ajax, had refused at the eleventh hour to take him for Barcelona. More fool Barcelona, you may think. Moreover, whereas Capello's relations with his players have been tense, Vialli's are almost ideal.

In Italy, as in Germany, managers and coaches must pass a demanding course before they are allowed to run leading clubs. Indeed, the Germans insist on their gaining experience in the lower leagues.

Serie A is full of those who did little as players then came up through the ranks as coaches. Thus Alberto Malesani, in his first, impressive season at Fiorentina after a rewarding spell in Serie B at modest Chievo, has decided to move on to Bologna. Arrigo Sacchi, who may succeed him, began by coaching his local amateur club and went on through junior football, ultimately to run Milan and Italy.

In England, Dave Jones is

having a fine first season at Southampton, refuting those who doubted him when he arrived from Stockport County.

Yet when the West Germany national team was faltering, the Germans ignored all their elaborate managerial criteria and appointed Franz Beckenbauer, their former famous captain, who had never coached at any level. He responded by taking them to two consecutive World Cup finals, winning in 1990.

The existence of player-managers in English football is more surprising, given that so much is expected of our managers by comparison with the continentals, who are confined to coaching and dealing with the media and are largely kept out of the transfer market.

In his first years at Liverpool, Kenny Dalglish did achieve great things as player-manager, though he had an exceptional club and a solid administration behind him. Generalisation is dangerous. Managers, even Dalglish, not to mention Capello, tend to have their ups and downs, whether or not they are still playing, but, on the face of it, there is a strong case for a division of labour.

FOOTBALL SATURDAY

Making a monkey out of another fixture crisis

A few years back, I was offered the kind of television programme that most presenters can only dream of. It was a gameshow called *Hoodwink* and was to be made by Scottish Television. Though its regular rounds were ingenious and thoroughly gripping, it was the climax to each show that would have seen the streets of Britain deserted every Thursday and made the interest in Deirdre's imprisonment seem like a lot of fuss about nothing. As succinctly as I can put it, what would happen was this:

You would arrive in the final with £5,000 in crisp fifties. Here, you would sit across a table from a chimpanzee dressed in a cravat, smoking jacket and a matching tattered hat. There would be two sets of levers. One set of three before you and another identical set before the chimp. The host — and it still hurts to reflect that this would have been me — would then ask five extremely difficult questions. Your response would be judged by which of the three levers you pulled. The chimp would have a go, too.

So if, when faced with the poser "Which Egyptian god was brother to Nut and worshipped as the personification of The Land?", you had, in blind panic, pulled lever three (Answer: Khnum) while the chimp had cheerfully nudged lever one (Answer: Geb), the chimp would have been seen to be cleverer than you and the fun could start.

For every time the ape took your intellectual pangs down, it would be specially-trained to climb across to your half of the desk, take away £1,000 of the fifties and return to its seat, where it would unscrew the top of a sweetie jar and pop the swag inside. As soon as I read the programme's outline, I knew that here was just the sort of thing Logie-Baird had in mind when he legged it down to the patent office.

The sets were built, contestants screened, budgets generously allotted when a spanner went into the works. A group of animal rights activists — I'm not sure which ones — had got a whiff of a pilot script and began harassing STV HQ with the clear and immovable brief that nobody was going to make a monkey out of the primates.

At first, it seemed as if they might be placated. They were shown around the purpose-built chimp dressing-rooms in Glasgow, where

DANNY BAKER



three walls had been knocked through to create a soothing, straw-strewn haven complete with two suspended tyres. They met with the chimp's handlers — a fiercely protective couple — who had come up with the idea of having four "Professors", for that was to be the name of our cash-grabbing star, so as not to exhaust any one performer with something like a three-hour day. They even watched humans go through the chimp's prospective movements to assuage fears that the physical risks in pulling levers, standing on tables and putting £50 into sweetie jars were on a par with a Roman amphitheatre.

For a while, it seemed as though *Hoodwink* might get green-lighted. Then, during a fatal delay while we waited for our main chimp to clear through quarantine (it had been in Africa shooting *Gorillas In The Mist* inside an actual gorilla suit ... I am not making this up) the

I'll name that team in ...

EVERYONE knows the shortest name in the league belongs to Bury. Now a search is on for Britain's longest team name. The present front-runners are The Greek Cypriot Brotherhood of Cardiff. All other candidates gratefully accepted.

FACT: Charlton's Andy Gray's real name is Kermit.

activists found out about a drama featuring a lion that STV were also producing and threw a blanket "No" upon the whole circus.

Hoodwink got shelved and I was offered the safer, but less rewarding series of *Win Lose or Draw*. I took it and helmed the vehicle for three years, but I never shook off the feeling that I had been a starving dog given a rubber bone.

I thought I was over my outrage and depression at the meddling nannying that sank *Hoodwink* until I looked over the fixture list for this Easter. Now, correct me if I'm wrong (you usually do), but wasn't it tradition up until about two minutes ago that, over Easter weekend, clubs played something like four times in five days? That no matter how much we envied their swarming around the rest of the year, at Easter they had to exert themselves like galley slaves?

That was the beauty part. No matter how impressive you had been all season, unless you could tough out the assault course that was heralded by the hot-cross bun you basically knew nothing. I remember marvelling at the part of the programme that revealed:

Apr 10: Wrexham (a)
Apr 11: Wrexham (h)
Apr 13: Reading (h)
Apr 15 (am): Plymouth (a)
Apr 15 (pm): Carlisle (a)

and, blow me, I think they played on the seventeenth, too. You might start the bank holiday in a stronger position than Notts County, but, by the time NatWest opened for business again, you needed 30 points from your last six games just to avoid the drop.

Today, however, I note that some clubs — take a wild guess — are playing but twice with a full couple of days off in between. And that's the Easter pile-up is it? Out of the 96 hours available for work they'll be at it for just three. Bitching all the way, too, you can bet your life.

Last Easter, I instigated a phone-in to find the person in Britain who has played the most football in the shortest space of time. There were at least 20 calls with corroborative stories where three matches were completed with just short-journey time breaking them up and a couple more boasting four matches spread right across the daylight hours. True, it might be argued that these events may not have featured the highest standards of soccer competition but, as anyone who watched Blackburn v Man United on Monday knows, neither does much of the Premiership.

Then we come to Mick Gosbee. Who is Mick Gosbee? Well, Mick Gosbee — and I don't even know if that's how this hero spells his name — was the only person to respond to the staggering query: Has anyone ever played two games simultaneously? "Yes," Gosbee said, "I have."

It seems Mick was the Paul Ince of his Sunday side, who play in Berkshire. One week, both his outfits' A and B sides were sched-

uled to play on adjoining pitches, with the B team able to field just eight players. I won't labour you with the delicate political discussions that had to be entered into, but suffice to say that Mick was allowed to be named in both squads and, so long as he entered either game during a dead-ball moment, was considered the legitimate No 8 for two of the competing teams. How did he apportion his time?

"I didn't," Mick told me. "I was constantly being called for and ran around like a blue-arsed fly, an attack here, in a wall there, clearing here and being booked there." Both teams lost and some may therefore consider his enterprise a failure. I do not. His efforts hint at what we might be, of speeches that begin "Nation Awake!" that football might be a pleasure and not a pain. In France, they would dedicate parks to this magnificent man. Here, he languishes in the shadows while professional footballers are fed metaphorical peeled grapes on silk cushions.

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Merson missed a number of scoring chances in the midweek match at Bramall Lane, including one from the penalty spot

Merson's miss gets stamp of approval

What about Paul Merson's penalty in midweek? How lousy was that? Only a thumped own goal or tripped referee cheers up a match like the kind of blousy, scatterbrained strike Merson launched from 12 yards at Bramall Lane. Talk about mis-hit! When a penalty is that far wide, a sort of grandeur creeps in and usually it is polite to pretend to admire what the player was trying to do. The difference in this case is that nobody can actually work out what he was trying to do.

The trick is, they say, to either place it or blast it. Merson attempted both, but, critically, the place he blasted for was his own front door in Middlesbrough. Still, he shouldn't feel bad about it. Within actual 90-minute matches, I've never thought penalties should be taken seriously. Oh, they count and can be crucial, but there's always something fraudulent about them. Even today, football results highlight them, in case readers think the match was settled fair and square.

Bury (0) Chelsea (0)
Nixon 75 Vialli 80 (pen)

They are pure froth, crackpot wildcards tagged on to the rules like "Get out of jail free" cards in Monopoly. That they are treated these days like sombre rituals, complete with "bravery" and "nerve", makes me laugh like a loon. Anyone who's ever played the game before the age of 12 has heard the ear-splitting chorus of "Let's take it!" when a penalty is awarded. Quite when this exuberance is replaced by a dread sense of responsibility remains muddy. Then again, it has been a few years since I was 12 and it may be that youngsters now consider the penalty taker as the doomed, courageous tail-gunner in a team. This, though, is backed up by reports from a recent junior match in Milton Keynes, where the penalty shoot-out required 32 attempts before a scoreline of 2-1 was arrived at.

If this is typical of our future national strike-rate from the spot, we may as well just give the 2006 World Cup to some ten-year-old in Frankfurt right now and save the nation more shame. As for Merson's blunder, I shall start a campaign immediately to have the entire sequence issued on commemorative stamps that, when flicked through swiftly, will show the miss in all its insane glory.

Sound advice for refs

A few weeks back, I wrote about a non-league referee who had his red and yellow cards stolen and was reduced to cutting up Weetabix and cornflakes boxes to improvise. This led me to ponder the practicality of his commandeering an Edam cheese for matches or, if finances were tight, a rhubarb and custard boiled sweet.

Now, of course, reality has bested our piousish ruminating. Mark Tester is a referee and was recently in charge of a game in Wiltshire in a field that backed on to a pub. When he arrived, he was horrified to discover that he had left his whistle and the spare at his home nearly 30 miles away and, furthermore, had to confess to the already stripped teams and their supporters that physical whistling was a gift denied him.

The cat's out the bag now, David

Regular readers will know that nothing perks up appreciation of the great game, and I suppose this column, more than the realization that certain football celebrities have localities in those even more famous. We recall David Platt as Mr Punch; Iain Dowie as the computer game hero, Earthworm Jim; David Platt as the enigmatic Glenryk Pichard from the famous tin. This week, while tidying my son's shelves, I notice that, from beneath the red and white stretch-topper of Dr Seuss' Cat in the Hat, left, beam the unmistakable features of Tottenham's David Howells, right.

ACTUAL exchange between Alan Parry and Colin Todd after Bolton's 0-0 draw with Wimbledon last week:
Parry: Do you look at this as a point gained or two points dropped?
Todd: Certainly a point not gained.
Parry: I see.

David Powell joins the nation's hardest football supporters

Hop to it, you're on the most novel Easter parade in town

It is one of the oldest jokes about poorly-supported football clubs. "What time is the kick-off?" the inquiry goes. "What time can you get here?" comes the reply. In the Westward Developments Devon League, this Easter, the joke is reality.

"The league is breaking its own rules about kick-offs being at three o'clock," Phil Hiscox, the league secretary, said. It is even insisting that kick-offs are delayed until the supporters turn up. Very special supporters, though.

The groundhoppers are non-League devotees who are more interested in where they are watching a game than the standard of it. After five years on the Northern Hop, exhausting new grounds in the north-east, fresh territory is being explored in Devon.

The hoppers are packing seven matches into 34 hours, three yesterday, four today. About 300 hoppers began in awful weather at Topsham Town yesterday morning and will finish at Plymouth Parkway this evening. Well, most of them. Gerry Shepherd will not be finished.

Shepherd is 65, played local football for 45 years and will be visiting his thousandth ground when he walks through the turnstile ... er, gap ... at Plymouth Parkway. Before returning home to Wimbledon, he has two more matches planned for tomorrow. And Monday? "A little wind-down at Dawlish," Shepherd said. An easy day for the man on his seventh Easter Hop, a 100 per cent appearance record.

So grateful is the Devon League to the likes of Shepherd that, in the event of traffic delays between matches, kick-off is delayed. It happened last year, when tractors on the road from Teignmouth to Newton Abbot got in the way.

Yesterday, it might have been snow-ploughs. Looking out from the Topsham clubhouse, away to the left, past the

home goalkeeper, one could see snow on the hills. Seeing a Topsham goalkeeper at all was fortunate. The match, Topsham versus Budleigh Salterton, should not have been played. Groundhoppers made it happen.

Sue Bulled, the Topsham secretary, was exerting influence. The club was expecting eight times their average gate of 80. "This game is going ahead, come what may."

Never mind that Paul Harris, the referee, thought that the pitch was "iffy". It had been critical for Topsham not to fall another game behind. Now, after a 1-0 win, their first championship looks within reach. Win five of their seven matches in hand and they will be up with the leaders.

So concerned had Hiscox been that matches would be called off that he had provisionally arranged alternative entertainment: skittles, a quiz and seats at Budleigh Salterton for Manchester United versus Liverpool. "That was plan Z," Hiscox said, relieved.

The Devon League is the newest in the football pyramid, only six years old. The groundhoppers were visiting for the second time and their presence, together with the appeal of the top versus second place clash yesterday, Cullumpton at home to Willand Rovers, ensured a league record crowd of 693. Average gate at Speeds Meadow: 80.

The groundhoppers come with various rituals. One insists on touching both crossbars, another on photographing the corner flags. Three St Albans City supporters, with their team not playing, had chosen the Devon Hop. "In the Ryman League, we do not go very far, just around the M25," Mark James, one of them, said.

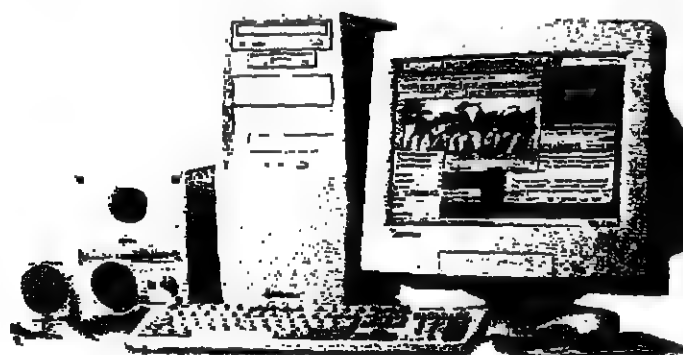
Cullumpton and Willand drew 1-1, but Trevor Atkins, the Topsham manager, was not there. Was it not an ideal chance to run the rule over Willand before they go there on Wednesday? "Normally I would, but I am absolutely frozen," Atkins said. "I am going to put my feet up by the fire." The groundhoppers must have thought him mad.

An amateur he may be, but his dedication bears the mark of a profes-

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FOOTBALL SATURDAY

Ferdinand presents case for defence in football awards

It is the time of year for awards, with Dennis Bergkamp winning the Professional Footballers' Association player of the year and Michael Owen the young player. Both are worthy victors who have had wonderful seasons, but they did not figure on my voting slip.

Even though he is only 19, my choice for player of the year was Rio Ferdinand, the West Ham United and England centre half, who I believe has a hugely successful career ahead of him. There is maybe a bit of bias in choosing another defender, but it does annoy me that it always seems to be strikers who are recognised. In the past 20 years, only Paul McGrath and Gary Pallister have broken up a succession of forwards. Maybe it is time to set up a defenders' trade union.

There are similarities between

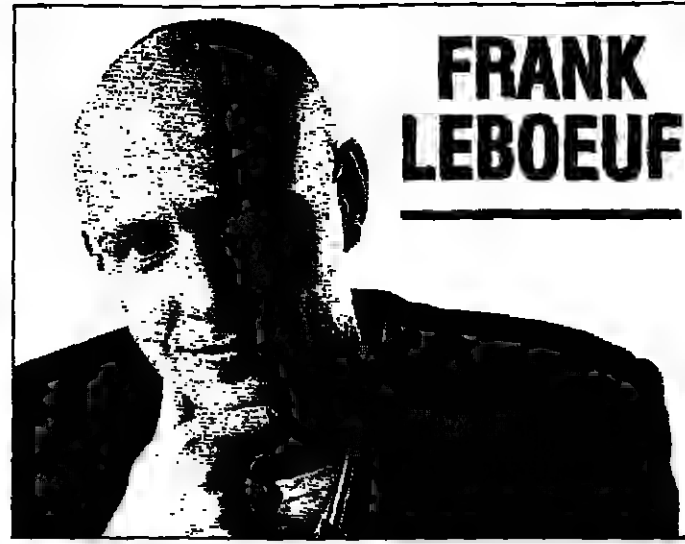
young Rio and myself. I like to think both of us try to use the ball wherever possible and only whack it away in desperate circumstances. We are both more natural sweepers than central defenders.

Rio probably has an advantage over me when it comes to dealing with big, physical players like Duncan Ferguson. Everyone knows that I am not at my most comfortable when there is a great hulking centre forward trying to knock me around all over the place. It is a legacy of learning my football in France, where there are very few forwards in that mould. I was generally a sweeper, so did not have too many of those one-to-one confrontations with raging-bull strikers.

Being brought up in England, Rio will have been used to that style and I think he can cope well in most situations. He is still

young so, obviously, he has plenty to learn, but I would be very surprised if Glenn Hoddle did not already regard him as a regular squad member with real potential. I did vote for a striker for the young player of the year award, but it was not Owen. I went for Darren Huckerby, of Coventry City, who has a wonderful range of skills. Maybe he is not the most consistent, but on his day he can show great technique. I shall be watching his career with interest.

Graham misses point
I must not let this column pass without responding to George Graham. After our 3-1 defeat at Elland Road on Wednesday night, the Leeds United manager had a little dig at our club by claiming that Gianluca Vialli was simply changing the team around because it is "fashionable". Mr Graham



FRANK
LEBOEUF

should look at the facts before he shoots his mouth off.

The reality — and I would have thought it would be obvious to a man of Graham's experience — is that we have been playing games every three days for as long as I can remember. I was one of the players left out on Wednesday and I had no objections because I needed a rest.

The other reason for changes, and again it seems to be stating the obvious, is that we have already qualified for Europe by winning the Coca-Cola Cup. Having slipped down the league, our main

priority is to win the Cup Winners' Cup, so the manager is quite right to prepare the players as best possible for next week's semi-final second leg at home to Vicenza.

None of this means that we have given up in the FA Carling Premiership. Of course, whoever is selected will give their best until the end of the season, because we want to prove that we are a strong club, but Luca can hardly be blamed for doing what is best for Chelsea and he certainly does not deserve criticism from someone like George Graham. Maybe if his team had been in a cup final and a

European semi-final, he would have a little more understanding.

Fortune favours United
It is a huge disappointment that we are no longer contenders for the championship. Inconsistency has been our undoing, because I think we have shown that, on our day, we can be as impressive as anyone. There have also been those days we would prefer to forget and I think all the players are aware that until they eradicate those sudden losses of form, we will let slip the few points that are the difference between being title-winners and the rest.

As an impartial observer now, I have to say that Manchester United will go on to win the championship. It might have been different if they were still involved in the European Cup, because it was so evident that it was their priority, if not their obsession. Now, though, they have no distractions and they appear to be getting their strongest team back to fitness at just the right time.

Arsenal can push them hard, even with so many games remaining. It will not be easy for them to survive such a tough programme, but they are a resilient team who can get through anything.

When a competition is so close, you also need luck and everything I have seen recently suggests that United are enjoying

every ounce of it. I watched their game against Wimbledon and everything fell perfectly for them. Michael Hughes had a great chance to put Wimbledon ahead, but his shot cannoned into a defender who did not know anything about it. Then United went to the other end and scored two goals that Joe Kinnear was entitled to be furious about because of the possibility of offside.

It is one of the oldest sayings in sport that you make your own luck and maybe United deserve theirs. With their record in recent seasons, clearly they have players who know what it takes. I like to think that the rest of us are closing the gap and I am sure Chelsea, among others, will be coming back at them even stronger next season.

Just call me Oscar
Look out Eric Cantona. That is all I can say after I made my acting debut this week in Dream Team, the football show on Sky TV. I suppose it helped that I only had to play myself and there were not too many lines to learn, but the director seemed happy and maybe I should add acting to my list of potential careers once I put my boots away for the last time. It was a stressful debut, but at least you can reshoot the scene if it goes badly the first time. I needed three takes — in football, of course, you only get one.

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP

(Last week's position in brackets)	PLAYED	POINTS	GOAL DIFF.	HOME					AWAY					LAST 10 MATCHES W-D-L		CURRENT POSITION
				W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A			
1. MANCHESTER UTD (1)	34	67	+39	12	3	2	38	8	8	4	5	26	17	5-3-2	D1	
2. ARSENAL (2)	30	60	+23	11	2	2	30	9	6	7	2	19	17	8-2-0	W4	
3. LIVERPOOL (3)	32	55	+20	10	2	4	31	15	5	8	3	24	20	3-5-2	D1	
4. LEEDS UTD (6)	33	54	+15	9	3	5	27	17	7	3	6	23	18	6-1-3	W2	
5. CHELSEA (5)	32	51	+23	9	2	3	28	12	7	1	10	33	26	3-0-7	L1	
6. BLACKBURN ROVERS (4)	31	51	+10	10	3	3	38	22	4	6	5	14	20	3-1-6	L1	
7. WEST HAM UTD (7)	31	47	+4	11	3	1	32	10	3	2	11	12	38	4-4-2	L1	
8. DERBY COUNTY (8)	31	45	+3	10	3	3	28	14	3	3	9	16	27	4-1-5	L3	
9. ASTON VILLA (11)	33	45	-2	8	3	6	24	21	5	3	8	16	21	6-0-4	W3	
10. COVENTRY CITY (9)	31	44	+1	7	7	1	22	14	4	4	8	15	22	6-3-1	D1	
11. SOUTHAMPTON (10)	32	43	-3	10	1	5	27	18	3	3	10	14	26	6-0-4	L1	
12. LEICESTER CITY (12)	31	41	+3	5	8	3	17	12	5	3	7	19	21	3-4-3	D1	
13. SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY (13)	32	40	-12	9	4	4	28	22	2	3	10	18	36	4-2-4	W1	
14. WIMBLEDON (14)	31	37	-4	5	5	7	16	19	4	5	5	14	15	3-3-4	D2	
15. NEWCASTLE UTD (15)	31	36	-7	6	5	6	17	18	3	4	7	11	17	2-4-4	D1	
16. TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR (16)	32	35	-16	6	6	4	19	20	3	2	11	14	29	4-3-3	D1	
17. EVERTON (17)	32	34	-11	6	3	6	20	22	2	7	8	16	25	2-5-3	D1	
18. BOLTON WANDERERS (19)	32	31	-19	5	8	3	16	16	1	5	10	13	32	2-3-5	D1	
19. BARNLEY (18)	32	31	-40	6	3	6	22	29	3	1	13	11	44	4-1-5	L3	
20. CRYSTAL PALACE (20)	31	26	-27	0	4	10	8	29	6	4	7	19	25	1-0-9	L1	

ATTACK	
Goals scored	Avg
1. Chelsea	61 1.91
2. Manchester Utd	64 1.88
3. Liverpool	55 1.72
4. Blackburn	52 1.68
5. Arsenal	48 1.63
6. Leeds	50 1.52
7. Sheffield Wed	48 1.44
8. West Ham	44 1.42
9. Derby	44 1.42
10. Southampton	41 1.28
11. Aston Villa	40 1.24
12. Coventry	37 1.19
13. Leicester	36 1.16
14. Everton	36 1.12
15. Barnsley	33 1.03
16. Tottenham	33 1.03
17. Wimbledon	30 0.97
18. Bolton	29 0.91
19. Newcastle	26 0.80
20. Crystal Palace	27 0.87

SCORING TRENDS	
Goals per half	1st 2nd
1. Arsenal	25 24
2. Aston Villa	14 26
3. Barnsley	21 12
4. Blackburn	31 21
5. Bolton	12 17
6. Chelsea	28 35
7. Coventry	16 21
8. Crystal Palace	14 13
9. Derby	20 24
10. Everton	16 20
11. Leeds	24 25
12. Leicester	13 23
13. Liverpool	17 38
14. Manchester Utd	23 40
15. Newcastle	13 15
16. Sheffield Wed	21 25
17. Southampton	15 26
18. Tottenham	15 17
19. West Ham	16 28
20. Wimbledon	11 19

SCORERS	
Premiership only	Goals
1. Sutton (Blackburn)	17
2. Owen (Liverpool)	15
3. Owen (Coventry)	14
4. Galtchov (Blackburn)	14
5. Bergkamp (Arsenal)	13
6. Harrison (West Ham)	13
7. Huckerby (Coventry)	13
8. Cole (Manchester Utd)	13
9. Salinas (Derby)	11
10. Di Santo (Sheff Wed)	11
11. Wright (Arsenal)	11
12. Huckerby (Coventry)	11
13. Wanchop (Derby)	11
14. Blake (Bolton)	10
15. Wallace (Leeds)	10
16. Wright (Arsenal)	10
17. Carbone (Sheff Wed)	9
18. Davies (Southampton)	9
19. Ferguson (Everton)	9
20. Fowler (Liverpool)	9
21. McManis (Liverpool)	9
22. Reid (Barnsley)	9
23. Vialli (Chelsea)	9

CAUTIONS	
Cards issued	Yellow Red
1. Everton	68 5
2. Leeds Utd	67 3
3. Arsenal	61 3
4. Chelsea	61 3
5. C Palace	62 2
6. Coventry	68 5
7. Derby	57 1
8. Bolton	57 0
9. Manchester Utd	57 0
10. Barnsley	51 4
11. Southampton	52 3
12. Sheffield Wed	51 3
13. Blackburn	50 3
14. West Ham	49 3
15. Newcastle	49 2
16. Tottenham	50 1
17. Liverpool	46 2
18. Wimbledon	44 1
19. Leicester	40 2
20. Aston Villa	40 1

REFEREES	
Premiership only	Cards issued P Yellow Red
1. G Willard	17 79 7
2. M Read	18 72 2
3. G Poll	18 71 6
4. U Rennie	17 67 3
5. G Barber	18 70 3
6. J Winter	18 80 2
7. D Ellery	17 60 4
8. P Durkin	16 56 3
9. A Wilkie	19 67 2
10. S Dunn	14 45 2
11. M Riley	16 49 2
12. M Barry	16 50 1
13. P Jones	19 53 2
14. P Alcock	16 47 1
15. D Gallagher	15 42 0
16. M Bodanham	17 49 2
17. G Ashby	17 47 2
18. K Burge	17 43 4
19. S Lodge	18 46 2

DEFENCE	
Goals conceded	Avg
1. Manchester Utd	25 0.74
2. Arsenal	26 0.87
3. Leeds	35 1.06
4. Leicester	33 1.08
5. Liverpool	35 1.09
6. Wimbledon	34 1.10
7. Newcastle	35 1.13
8. Coventry	36 1.16
9. Chelsea	38 1.19
10. Aston Villa	42 1.27
11. West Ham	40 1.29
12. Derby	41 1.32
13. Blackburn	42 1.35
14. Southampton	44 1.37
15. Everton	47 1.47
16. Bolton	48 1.50
17. Tottenham	49 1.53
18. Crystal Palace	54 1.74
19. Sheffield Wed	58 1.81
20. Barnsley	73 2.28

CLEAN SHEETS	
Clean sheet	Failed to score
1. Arsenal	14 7
2. Aston Villa	8 11
3. Barnsley	6 9
4. Blackburn	11 8
5. Bolton	10 11
6. Chelsea	10 7
7. Coventry	10 11
8. Crystal Palace	5 11
9. Derby	9 12
10. Everton	8 11
11. Leeds Utd	11 11
12. Leicester	10 8
13. Liverpool	11 4
14. Manchester Utd	16 7
15. Newcastle	9 11
16. Sheffield Wed	7 6
17. Southampton	7 10
18. Tottenham	7 12
19. West Ham	7 8
20. Wimbledon	9 12

KEY FIXTURES	
THE CHAMPIONSHIP AND EUROPEAN QUALIFICATION	
The spread of key fixtures for the clubs in the top half of the table is such that the FA Carling Premiership title and qualification for European club competitions will not be decided until the last week of the season.	
Coventry v Aston Villa (today)	
West Ham v Derby (today)	
Blackburn v Arsenal (April 13)	
West Ham v Blackburn (April 18)	
Coventry v Liverpool (April 19)	
Chelsea v Liverpool (April 25)	
Leeds v Coventry (April 25)	
Arsenal v Derby (April 25)	
Chelsea v Blackburn (April 25)	
Coventry v Blackburn (May 2)	
Liverpool v West Ham (May 2)	
Leeds v Manchester Utd (May 4)	
Liverpool v Arsenal (May 6)	
Aston Villa v Arsenal (May 10)	
Derby v Liverpool (May 10)	

THE RELEGATION BATTLE	
Easter should clarify the relegation picture with six important games being played — the clubs on the fringes may find relative safety. There should be added drama should unfold on May 2, with three interesting ties.	
Barnsley v Sheffield Wed (today)	
Crystal Palace v Leicester (today)	
Southampton v Wimbledon (today)	
Newcastle v Barnsley (April 13)	
Wimbledon v Everton (April 13)	
Leicester v Southampton (April 14)	
Barnsley v Tottenham (April 18)	
Everton v Leicester (April 18)	
Everton v Sheffield Wed (April 25)	
Tottenham v Newcastle (April 25)	
Newcastle v Leicester (April 29)	
Liverpool v Bolton (May 2)	
Bolton v Crystal Palace (May 2)	
Wimbledon v Tottenham (May 2)	
Crystal Palace v Sheffield Wed (May 10)	
Tottenham v Southampton (May 10)	

INTERNET	
FA Premiership clubs' official websites	
Arsenal	www.arsenal.co.uk
Aston Villa	www.astonvillafc.co.uk
Barnsley	www.barnsleyfc.co.uk
Blackburn	www.blackburn.co.uk
Bolton	www.bolton.co.uk
Chelsea	www.chelseafc.co.uk
Coventry	www.cocfc.co.uk
C Palace	www.cpalace.co.uk
Derby	www.derby.co.uk
Everton	www.everton.co.uk
Leeds	www.leeds.co.uk
Liverpool	www.liverpool.co.uk
Man Utd	www.manutd.co.uk
Newcastle	www.newcastle.co.uk
Sheff Wed	www.sheffwed.co.uk
Southampton	www.southampton.co.uk
Tottenham	www.tottenham.co.uk
West Ham	www.westham.co.uk
Wimbledon	www.wimbledon.co.uk
FA Premiership	www.fapremiership.co.uk

WEEKEND MATCHES

TODAY	
10:00 3-0 (unless stated) * denotes all-time Pool coupon numbers in brackets in Premier League, 7 denotes sold out, otherwise seats available.	
FA Carling Premiership	
(1) Arsenal v Newcastle	(2) Barnsley v Sheffield Wednesday
(3) Bolton v Blackburn	(4) Chelsea v Tottenham
(5) Coventry v Aston Villa	(6) Crystal Palace v Leicester
(7) Everton v Leeds	(8) Southampton v Wimbledon
(9) West Ham v Derby	
Norwich League	
First division	
(10) Birmingham v Port Vale	(11) Bradford v Nottingham Forest
(12) Charlton v Reading	(13) Huddersfield v Crewe
(14) Ipswich v Tranmere	(15) Middlesbrough v Bury
(16) Oxford Utd v Swindon	(17) Sheffield Utd v Norwich
(18) Stockport v West Bromwich	(19) Stoke v Portsmouth
(20) Wolverhampton v Manchester City	
Nottingham Forest	P W D L F A Pts
Sunderland	40 23 10 7 74 41 79
Charlton	42 20 9 10 76 49 78
Middlesbrough	40 22 9 9 62 39 75
Sheff Utd	38 18 11 9 54 47 67
Ipswich	40 16 13 9 55 40 67
Birmingham	41 16 10 10 53 34 63
Wolverhampton	40 17 9 14 47 40 60
Bradford	41 15 14 12 41 47 59
West Bromwich	41 15 11 15 41 47 59
Stockport	41 16 7 18 62 80 59
Sheff Wed	41 15 8 16 56 80 51
Swindon	41 14 8 18 56 80 51
Crewe	40 16 8 20 48 67 60
Huddersfield	40 12 11 17 49 59 47
Tranmere	41 9 10 13 39 50 48
Bury	41 9 10 13 39 50 48
Portsmouth	41 10 10 10 45 55 45
QPR	41 10 10 10 4

Hard work ethic and fervent desire go down well at Kingsholm

Hill's clear view brings best out of Gloucester

One sign of advancing years is to see players once perceived as divisive bridging a void. It is a curious comfort emotion, not least for the evident integrity in a game that, day by day, unearths more conflict, more bizarre ways of wounding its own image.

Richard Hill has changed little since he emerged as a student from Exeter University 13 years ago. The hair, then short, is now fashionably shaved, the grin has the confidence of achievement behind it, as a player, coach, husband, father — but the intensity remains, the fervent desire to carry himself and his club forward.

Back then, the club was Bath. Now, it is Gloucester, where Hill, 36, has been director of rugby for nearly three seasons. The two seem made for each other, even though Hill, as a scrum half, took immense satisfaction in Bath's victories at Kingsholm. Perhaps it is to do the work ethic, which is so strong a part of the Gloucester make-up and which Hill personifies.

Today, Gloucester stand in the way of Newcastle's march to the Allied Dunbar Premiership title. Not many months ago, few would have expected the West Countrymen to form much of a hurdle, but Hill has been at the forefront of the administrative hard core that has taken the culture of a proud, definitively-English club and moved it into the professional era.

In so doing, he has helped to give a great rugby area back its pride and has advanced England's cause with his development of home-grown talent. His club is part of English First-Division Rugby, which has been at odds with the Rugby Football Union (RFU); the owner of his club — Tom Walkinshaw, the Scot who created the Arrows Formula One team — is chairman of the clubs' negotiating panel that will strive this month to lay conflict to rest. Yet Hill is also England A coach and, in that sense, in direct line of succession behind Clive Woodward as national coach.

One wonders if, in fact, such individuals as Hill and Andy Robinson, his old colleague from Bath, see the problems of the English game more clearly than those at the top of the administrative mountain. If any club has found its way by degrees into the new era, step by patient step rather

DAVID HANDS



than hoping to resolve every difficulty at a stroke, it is Gloucester; true, they might not have done so but for Walkinshaw's cash, but they remain an object lesson for more pretentious rivals.

It has helped Hill that he has known bad times: suspension by the RFU when he captained the England team that lost a disgraceful match with Wales in 1987; dismissal from the field the next year in a club match; the bitter disappointment when, at the end of his playing days in 1994, Bath could find no coaching role for him. His personal revision of his goals, has, however, been a blessing for Gloucester, who are notoriously parochial in their acceptance of outsiders.

"My move here was enforced, but with hindsight, it was the best thing that could have happened," Hill said. "I suppose what I brought with me from Bath was the knowledge of how to win, which I'm trying to instil into Gloucester's players, and the responsibility of the individual to do most of the work himself."

"Since their appearance in the 1990 cup final, Gloucester had been a club in free fall. The players, and this is true of other clubs, seemed to expect the coaches to spoon-feed them, to provide them with the structure for skills training, fitness training, to do all the video work. "I shouldn't have to stand over them to make sure they do that, they should have done it them-



Hill looks forward to further success for his club after victory in the Cheltenham and Gloucester Cup

elves before I begin a technical session. My philosophy is to do it yourself."

This is the old Hill speaking, the man of 200 passes a day during his international career of 29 England appearances, the grafter who turned himself into a natural. But the same approach has an immense appeal to the Gloucester membership, in a city where unemployment has been high and where

they won by beating Bedford. It may not be among the most sought-after trophies in the English game, but it will lift his players.

"It's vitally important you don't change the culture drastically," Hill said. "We must keep the Gloucester identity, but we have had to go overseas to compete. The members understood that and, when we signed Philippe Saint-Andre from France, followed by

"We can't be closeted in our own little world, we have to learn from other cultures — as long as you keep the balance right. We're playing in an English league and it's important that the vast majority of players we produce are English."

It could be Woodward or Fran Cotton talking, yet Hill believes that what is right for his club is also right for England, that there is a halfway house that permits the identification of local talent — such as Rob Jewell, the young Gloucester wing — alongside Saint-Andre, the former France captain.

He is patently enjoying the Kingsholm experience. It is, he says, a spooky feeling when supporters write in dissecting his team in a way the Bath regulars never did, but he feels at one with the vociferous Shed. Joshua, his son, 11, has turned into a true cherry-and-white supporter, while Karen, his wife, and Natalie, 9, offer a properly feminine perspective on the game. The family home remains in Bath, the trip to and from giving Hill "thinking time". Of the bridges, perhaps, that he has crossed.

'He has restored a great rugby area's pride and furthered England's cause'

the rugby club's success or failure means so much to the man and woman in the street.

Hill has entered into that relationship. The mail box, he reflects, has not been overflowing of late, which must mean that he is doing something right. Indeed, only eight days ago, Gloucester collected their first silverware for years, appropriately in the shape of the Cheltenham and Gloucester Cup, which

Terry Fanolua from Western Samoa and Richard Tombs from Australia, people felt the club could look forward rather than constantly back over its shoulder.

"I wouldn't enjoy coaching a cosmopolitan side — there have to be certain values a club retains, a certain psychology and method in the way a side plays — but we'd have been poorer without the input of the overseas players.

Title ambition buried under wasted chances

HAVING worked so hard last year to win the championship outright, it is disappointing to find Wasp so near the bottom of the table.

What we achieved last season was through the hard-work ethic and we were delighted to gain a tangible reward for our efforts. Many people, including myself, have benefited from our collective success, the only exception, surprisingly, being Nigel Melville, the coach.

This season, we were optimistic but certainly not complacent. Defending our title was never going to be easy. We increased the squad by recruiting Mark Weedon, Simon Shaw and Trevor Leota to bolster the fight five. The ambition has always been to become better and better, as Bath and the All Blacks have shown year-in, year-out. Striving for excellence is the hallmark of all great sides, but for us, for a number of reasons, this season has been different.

We started well in Europe and went into the league with high expectations, but we suffered a series of defeats that undermined our confidence, allied to which we had a number of injuries to key players in key positions, such as Rob Henderson, Nick Greenstock, Andy Gomersall and Alex King. We have lost most of the back line at one time or another, but every club has those problems and I am not looking for excuses. You can blame the structure of the season or international, but ultimately you have to start taking responsibility yourself and appreciate that we have underperformed in a number of games.

Last year, we had the ability to win games when we did not play so well. We were cool under pressure and scored points when we needed to. The commitment and enthusiasm cannot be faulted this year, despite some poor results. Where we have fallen down is by not taking our chances and not finishing our good work. In rugby now, you spend a lot of time without the ball, so ball retention and conti-

nity have become the key to success.

Our past few games have been typical. We dominated the second half at Newcastle on Tuesday, yet came away with only 13 points. Sooner or later, we need to start winning. We are certainly not going to panic, but obviously we would like to be at the other end of the table.

We have seven games left, five of which are at home, starting with Harlequins tomorrow.

Then we meet Newcastle, Leicester, Northampton and Bath at Loftus Road and Sale and Richmond away. None of these will be easy games. The encouraging thing is that our performances are improving — but that is not enough. We have to start getting two points. That is imperative.

Now we have reached the cup final, a game that everyone will want to play in, that should have a positive effect on our league performances. It will galvanise the squad and give everyone something to aim at.

We continue under the assumption that there will be two teams going up and two down this season. We want to ensure that we stay up through our own endeavours, not through a change of the rules. The political battles that are going on seem to have new twists and turns every day, so we can do nothing for granted.

Now that Saracens have beaten Bath at home and away, everyone assumes it is a two-horse race for the championship, but if this year has shown anything, it is that anyone can win on their day. Newcastle are in the driving seat, with Saracens right behind them. The team that keeps calm under pressure will win. Newcastle and Saracens have shown in beating us and Bath respectively that they have the knack of winning games when they have been dominated for long periods. That is the motto of champions.

When you are not going well, you either face up to the challenges or run away. I am learning all the time and I relish the challenges to come.

Sooner or later we need to start winning

Pride of the valleys keep red flag flying high

Small village clubs remain the lifeblood of rugby in Wales. Gerald Davies pays tribute to two that are on the verge of making history in the Swalec Cup today

Last Sunday, the M4, which on quieter days delivers casual sight-seers towards the subdued delights of Stow-on-the-Wold, Westward Ho! and Ilfracombe, was transformed into an artery carrying a full-scale exodus from Wales. Coaches, emblazoned with red scarves and the flag of the red dragon ensured that there should be no mistake about their destination, nor their purpose.

They came from Narberth in the west or Ceredigion, slightly to the north and, thereafter, from all points eastwards to the border and beyond. Since the game against France was at Wembley, with a capacity of 72,000 — 20,000 more than Cardiff Arms Park — there were men, women and children who could enjoy the outing.

No country in the world, I suggest, can boast a loyalty to rugby as those who, three times this season, have filled

the great North London stadium. This at a time, and for well over a decade past, when Wales, through administrative argument and dissension, has seen this devotion severely tested. Yet for all this, the passion for rugby refuses to diminish.

Whence does this affirmation and fidelity, surprising and inspiring as it is, come? It springs from the villages and small clubs that adorn Wales with a rich patchwork of the H motive; on every free expanse of grass, goalposts announce this fealty to rugby.

This will be unambiguously on show today at Maes Dyfed. There, Seven Sisters, a small village north-east of Neath, will give a warm welcome to Garndiffaeth, who are neighbours of Pontypool.

In other words, a good, old-fashioned west versus east tussle. This is a confrontation between two clubs in the Welsh League fourth division; Seven Sisters are in fourth position, Garndiffaeth eighth.

So what is the big deal about this particular game? For the first time in the 26-year history of the Cup competition, sponsored now by Swalec, a club not from the higher echelons of Welsh rugby is assured of reaching the semi-finals. During the 26 tournaments so far, only 12 teams have reached the semi-final stage and all have come from the premier or first division (or their equivalent).

Llanelli lead the way with 19 appearances in the last four, from Cardiff (15), Swansea (13) and Aberavon (11). Both Seven Sisters and

Garndiffaeth have beaten teams from higher divisions. The former have beaten Tredegar and Cross Keys while the latter, who celebrate their 75th anniversary, took the scalps of Llanharan and Rummy. More significantly, and following in the footsteps of Penclawdd (who knocked Newport off their pedestal in 1980) and St Peter's (who pulled Cardiff down a peg or two in 1993), the Gwent club dispatched Bridgend in the fourth round.

With the present knee-jerk speculation surrounding the future of Kevin Bowring, the Wales coach, the bookmakers are even offering odds of 100-1 on Adrian Herbert, the Garndiffaeth coach, to take over the national post.

Village rugby is the lifeblood

of the game and, after the loss of heavy industry, the rugby club stands as the focal point of the small communities. Both Seven Sisters and Garndiffaeth have populations of no more than a couple of thousand, most of whom, you imagine, will be on the touchline today. It is a proud and honourable tradition that the instant and hasty change to professionalism has put under pressure.

"All our players get the same payment," David Watts, the Seven Sisters secretary, said. "We pay £40 for a win, that's all. But only in the league. Tomorrow our players will play for what our jersey represents and for the glory that lies ahead. We are what we are, a village club serving our people. We pay what we

can afford. Some clubs have ambitions which exceed their income.

"Eighty per cent of our team come from the village. The sons, the fathers and grandfathers played for us. Our committee works on a voluntary basis." Operating at this level, the heart of Welsh rugby takes over as purposefully and faithfully as ever. This is the nursery of the game. It is the irregular beat elsewhere that presents the problem.

Professionalism in rugby, despite the "boot" money of the past, is a concept not easily assimilated in Wales, where the ties of emotion and the strong sense of identity are, for the moment, a truer source of inspiration than the coldness of an impersonal contract.

If there is discord elsewhere, at least Seven Sisters and Garndiffaeth know where they stand and can live harmoniously. Until 2.30pm this afternoon.

Supporters launch Yates appeal fund

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

BATH supporters have launched an appeal fund for Kevin Yates, the prop forward. Yates is serving a six-month Rugby Football Union (RFU) suspension for biting the ear of Simon Fenn during a Telford Bitter Cup match against London Scottish in January.

The ban sidelined Yates for England's entire Five Nations Championship campaign and a demanding southern hemisphere summer tour featuring international matches against Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. He is considering a High Court appeal and Bath supporters have pledged to contribute towards his legal costs.

"As a result of numerous requests from members, Bath Rugby Supporters' Club has opened a fund to aid Kevin Yates," a statement issued by

Bath supporters said. "Kevin has always robustly maintained his innocence, but the costs of trying to clear his name are horrendous."

Yates is eligible to return on July 10, but faces the daunting prospect of rebuilding his career after being found guilty of such serious allegations. Fenn, an Australian flanker, required 28 stitches, although he has resumed playing.

The incident received worldwide attention, the entire Bath front row of Yates, Federico Mendez and Victor Uboqui originally being cited by London Scottish as they demanded action.

Citation papers against Mendez and Uboqui were subsequently scrapped and Yates was then suspended on full pay by his club pending the RFU hearing.

RUGBY UNION STATISTICS

ATTACK

This table ranks clubs in the Allied Dunbar Premiership first division in terms of most points, tries and penalty goals scored. The fourth category is the percentage in which they have scored tries. The best overall side in attack is calculated by averaging every club's performance in each category. The figures in brackets denote each club's rankings in the individual categories.

Club	Points	Tries	Penalty	Tries in %	Overall
1 Bath	28.00 (3)	9.44 (2)	2.73 (4)	100 (1)	2.25
2 Sale	27.40 (3)	3.20 (3)	2.00 (5)	100 (1)	2.75
3 Saracens	27.17 (4)	2.70 (7)	3.17 (2)	94 (3)	4.00
4 Newcastle	30.33 (1)	4.00 (1)	2.00 (5)	83 (7)	4.50
5 Leicester	26.67 (5)	2.87 (5)	2.87 (3)	92 (7)	6.50
6 Gloucester	22.41 (6)	2.29 (6)	2.47 (6)	94 (3)	6.25
7 Harlequins	24.38 (8)	2.75 (8)	1.81 (11)	84 (3)	6.50
8 Wasp	21.40 (10)	1.87 (9)	2.67 (3)	92 (7)	7.75
9 Northampton	21.93 (9)	1.87 (9)	3.33 (1)	60 (12)	8.00
10 L. Irish	20.00 (11)	1.81 (11)	2.44 (7)	94 (3)	8.00
11 Richmond	23.76 (7)	3.17 (4)	1.84 (12)	88 (10)	8.25
12 Bristol	15.82 (12)	1.47 (12)	1.88 (10)	73 (11)	11.25

DEFENCE

This table uses the same principle as for the offence table. Only the categories are different — least points, tries and penalty goals against. The fourth category is the percentage of matches in which the opposition has failed to score a try.

Club	Points	Tries	Penalty	Tries in %	Overall
1 Northampton	17.60 (1)	1.87 (3)	1.87 (1)	7 (6)	2.25
2 Saracens	18.17 (3)	1.88 (2)	2.35 (5)	17 (2)	3.00
3 Newcastle	17.80 (2)	1.40 (1)	2.80 (10)	13 (3)	4.00
4 Leicester	20.33 (4)	1.87 (3)	2.53 (7)	13 (3)	4.25
5 Bath	20.73 (5)	2.20 (6)	2.13 (4)	13 (3)	4.50
6 Richmond	21.59 (6)	1.95 (5)	3.09 (12)	31 (1)	6.00
7 Sale	25.67 (8)	2.80 (7)	2.73 (9)	7 (6)	7.50
8 Gloucester	24.00 (7)	3.94 (8)	1.88 (12)	0 (10)	7.75
9 Wasp	28.53 (10)	3.00 (9)	2.80 (10)	7 (6)	8.75
10 Harlequins	27.50 (9)	3.13 (10)	2.50 (8)	0 (10)	8.75
11 Bristol	34.98 (12)	4.63 (12)	2.00 (3)	6 (9)	9.00
12 L. Irish	32.31 (11)	3.88 (11)	2.63 (6)	0 (10)	9.00

LEADING SCORERS

(Including Allied Dunbar Premiership and Telford's Bitter Cup)

Pos	Player	T	C	P	OG
301	M Lynagh (Saracens)	5	42	63	1
242	G Ross (Wasp)	1	29	61	2
212	J Stranely (Leicester)	3	31	43	2
210	M Mapletoft (Gloucester)	4	26	44	2
207	N Woods (London Irish)	6	27	41	2
181	P Grayson (Northampton)	3	20	37	3
168	S Mannix (Sale)	1	32	31	2
159	P Burke (Bristol)	2	20	35	2
150	J Callard (Bath)	1	23	29	1
148	R Andrew (Newcastle)	2	27	27	1
126	T Lacroix (Harlequins)	2	19	24	2

TRIES: 15: D Chapman (Richmond) 13: T Barn (Sale), 10: M Allen (Northampton) 9: W Greenwood (Leicester), C O'Shea (London Irish), D O'Leary (Harlequins), 8: J Naylor (Newcastle), R Wallace (Saracens), 7: J Wright (Richmond), A Nicol (Bath), G Armstrong (Newcastle).

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Allied Dunbar Premiership: Saracens first to complete double over Bath

Lynagh steps up pressure on Newcastle

Bath 13
Saracens 29

By DAVID HANDS
RUGBY CORRESPONDENT

NOW Newcastle know precisely where the threat to their assault on the Allied Dunbar Premiership title will come from. Saracens left the Recreation Ground yesterday, where they had never won before, having become the first side in five seasons of home-and-away fixtures to complete a league double over Bath, the European champions.

Saracens now stand level on points with Newcastle, though deficient on points difference and having played two games more, but the next eight days will be significant ones. Newcastle assault Fortress Kingsholm today and go to Watford next Sunday for their away fixture with Saracens, a match that will attract a record crowd of just under 20,000. "I think it will take English club rugby to new levels," Mark Evans, Saracens' director of rugby, said.

Under lowering skies and on a muddy pitch, Saracens went clinically about the business of inflicting Bath's first league defeat since the two clubs met on December 14.

This was a match Bath were desperate to win, but afterwards Andy Robinson, their director of rugby, graciously acknowledged the qualities of self-belief and defensive resolve shown by Saracens. Yet there was a systematic approach too, which left Bath unable to turn set-piece possession into more tangible rewards.

Never was that more apparent than in the third quarter, when Bath rampaged before the Saracens line but could not break it. They could achieve no more than one penalty from three attempts by Jonathan Callard and retreated to lick their wounds.

There is no better player to control a tight match than Michael Lynagh. His accuracy and perception have frustrated better teams than Bath and, on the treacherous surface, he turned them on their heel time and again. Not only that, he kicked his goals: two penalties in the first half, three in the second, which hammered nail after nail in the Bath coffin.

Bath were impressively efficient in the opening quarter, yet ended it with the modest return of three points. Twice Bath players were over the line, but Iwan Evans, following his own grub-kick, was judged to have touched down in touch-in-goal and Andy Nicol was denied by the sprawling body of Danny



Although Guscott, left, and Hilton try to drag him down, Pienaar gets the ball away to launch another attack for Saracens. Photograph: David Rogers/Allsport

Grewcock. When Saracens were penalised twice in quick succession and a penalty try loomed, Nicol opted for the kick at goal.

This spoke volumes for the commitment of the defenders and gradually their fierce tackling took its toll of the Bath ball-carriers so that, for all the promptings of Jeremy Guscott and Phil de Glanville, Bath's attacks faltered. Guscott, making one of his rare starts at fly half, was never totally subdued, but the space in which he revels was constantly denied him.

Guscott was on hand when Perry found a way through the middle and, although he was stopped, Adebayo swooped for the loose ball and the try—but it was scant reward for their efforts. Gradually, Bath's supremacy at the lineout withered and Saracens struck just before the interval. Johnson strode into space before handing on to Richard Wallace, the Ireland wing taking the outside line before dodging

inwards past three defenders for a delightful try.

Robinson described that as the first of the mistakes that cost Bath the game, though that gives less than credit to Saracens. The second "mistake" came midway through the second half after Saracens had absorbed a superbly-sustained period of pressure by Bath, now deprived of the injured De Glanville and attacking chiefly through their loose forwards, which allowed Callard to level the scores.

No one could deny it was a brilliantly-conceived score. Bracken stood off a scrum on halfway and received the ball from Shurnham. The scrum half broke clean through and chipped over Callard. Guscott headed the chase for the ball, but missed completely with an attempted fly kick. Saracens took it on and Pienaar was rewarded with the try.

Enough time remained for Bath to make up the deficit, but they broke on the rock of Lynagh's tactical sense. The

Australian, now partnered by Marcus Olsen, once a Bath player, stabbed a series of kicks through, content in the knowledge that Grewcock and Diprose would pressurise Bath's lineout and that his own scrum had the strength to impose itself.

And, of course, Lynagh, infallible throughout, kicked his goals. When he retires, at the season's end, it is hard to conceive that one player will be capable of replicating his all-round talents.

SCORES: Bath try: Adebayo (22min). Conversion: Callard. Penalty goals: Callard 2 (14, 48). Saracens' tries: R Wallace (41), Pienaar (59). Conversion: Lynagh 2. Penalty goals: Lynagh 5 (20, 30, 70, 78, 84).

SCORING SEQUENCE: Bath first: 3-0, 3-3, 10-3, 10-6, 10-13 (half-time), 31-3, 38-3, 45-3.

BATH: J Callard (capt), J Barmby, J Robinson, J Pritchard, S, A Adebayo, J Guscott, A Monk, D Hilton, M Hepp, V Ugochi (capt), J Medley, T, M Hepp, M Robinson, R Barmby, R Barmby, E Peters.

SARACENS: G Johnson, R Constable, P Bala, S Renshaw, R Wallace, M Lynagh, K Bracken (capt), M Olsen, B, R Gray (capt), B Reddy, T, G Chubb, P Wallace, P Johns, G Grewcock, B Shurnham, P Pienaar, A Diprose.

Referee: C White (Gloucestershire).

BOWLS

Harlow in pursuit of family double

By DAVID RHYS JONES

THE mixed pairs and four's championships, which traditionally bring the winter season to a close, offer a perennial reminder that bowls is a family game, with many husband-and-wife teams surviving to the final stages of both.

Yesterday, at Lincoln, the leads and skips of seven of the 32 pairs shared the same surname, though only five were married couples, the other two — Barbara and Greg Harlow, from the City of Ely, and June and Alastair Hollis, from Charnwood — being mother-and-son combinations.

Greg Harlow, the Irish Masters champion, is hoping for a second success, having partnered his sister, Joanne, to the title six years ago. When the draw pitted Ely against Charnwood in the opening round, the Harlows were glad to edge home 15-14.

Memories of the recent English men's championships at Melton Mowbray were evoked when Jamie Mills, the national singles champion, partnered Pat Oliver, of South Forest, to a 18-7 first-round win over Bridle and Bill Ward, of Avon Valley.

A second-round defeat by Gateshead for Mills and Oliver leaves them looking for a good win in the last round-robin session this morning if they are to qualify for the quarter-finals.

John Wickham, whose knee condition threatened to curtail his season, is now trotting up and down the green like a two-year-old after a visit to a faith healer and is hoping to add the mixed title to the men's triples that he won last week.

He skipped his Teignbridge clubmate, Ann Bundred, to a 20-9 victory over Peggy and Ted Hayward, of Worthing, and a 13-9 win over Carol Neave and Malcolm Nicholson, of North Walsham.

The surprise of the opening round was the 16-12 defeat of Mary Price, the woman bowler of the year in 1997, and Brett Long, of Desborough, by Eve East and her partner from Mid Suffolk, Mark Royal, a former British junior champion.

RACE FOR THE TITLE

Newcastle	25	14	0	1	455	267	26
Saracens	17	14	0	3	462	309	28
Bath	15	11	0	4	444	311	22

NEWCASTLE

Today:	Gloucester (a)
April 19:	Saracens (a)
April 22:	Worship (a)
April 26:	Bristol (h)
May 4:	Leicester (h)
May 10:	Bath (h)
May 17:	Harlequins (a)

SARACENS

April 19:	Newcastle (h)
April 25:	Leicester (a)
April 29:	Harlequins (a)
May 10:	London Irish (h)
May 14:	Northampton (h)

GLoucester

April 13:	Richmond (a)
April 18:	Gloucester (a)
April 25:	Sale (h)
April 28:	London Irish (h)
May 2:	Northampton (a)
May 11:	Newcastle (a)
May 17:	Worship (a)

Newcastle's fate in their own hands

By MARK SOUSTER

FOR all the talk about the possibility of Saracens or Bath winning the Allied Dunbar Premiership, the fact remains that Newcastle are the masters of their own destiny. The league leaders can afford to lose one of their remaining seven games and still take the title, but with games against both their closest rivals still to come and a demanding run-in over the next four weeks, beginning at Gloucester today, their resilience will be tested to the full.

Kingsholm has been a graveyard for both Saracens and Leicester this season and Gloucester entering nothing better than upsetting the odds. If they could replicate even partially their home form when travelling, then they would be challenging for the title: only three points away from Kingsholm tells its own story.

It is a failing that Richard Hill, the director of coaching, knows he has to address if the club is to translate its obvious potential into something more tangible. However, the possibility of English clubs re-entering Europe in some format as part of a negotiated settlement between the clubs and the Rugby Football Union means that there is every incentive to keep going to the finishing tape.

Not that Gloucester know any different. A full house of 10,000 will ensure a hostile reception for Newcastle, who looked jaded during the second half of their midweek win over Wasps. Pat Lam, their inspirational Western Samoa flanker, believes this was due to the club having had so many players absent on international and representative duty.

"It takes time to get again, to get back into what we call the Newcastle groove," Lam said. "At training this week, it has been like meeting up with old friends again. Now we are together for the next six weeks and that will really help. We expect a really tough battle at Gloucester and we have to be up for it mentally."

Lam will play today, but the rest of the Newcastle line-up will not be revealed until this morning by Rob Andrew, the director of rugby, who recently spent several days scouring south-west France for new props. Their main doubts concern Va'anga Tu'itama and Ross Nesdale, who have, respectively, knee and ankle injuries. In the absence of Pete Glanville, who is injured, Gloucester are captained by Tony Windo, the prop forward.

Phil Vickery, the England tight-head prop, has shoulder trouble and is replaced by Andy Deacon, with Steve Ojomoh at blindside flanker for Glanville. Behind the scrum, the England A pair of Chris Catling and Brian Johnson return, the latter after being concussed against Scotland last month.

Leicester, in fourth place, travel to Sale today and are able to name an unchanged side for the first time since October, which means that Michael Horak continues at full back with Austin Healey on the wing and Leon Lloyd among the replacements.

At the foot of the table, Wasps, who have a game in hand on London Irish, can capitalise on the postponement of the Exiles' game at Northampton today by beating Harlequins at Loftus Road tomorrow.

Richmond dazzle in seven-try show

Richmond 43
Bristol 3

By MICHAEL AYLWIN

RICHMOND are an infuriating team. The wildness with which their form has fluctuated this season has perplexed everyone. Yesterday, however, was one of their scintillating days, despite conditions that became almost unplayable by the end.

Much more of the rain that blighted the second half must threaten their game against Bath on Monday. Paradoxically, Richmond's best form coincided with the start of a second-half thunderstorm, the home side cutting loose with three brilliant tries in the 15 minutes after the interval. In so doing, they killed off any hopes that Bristol may have had at half-time of winning the game and condemned the West Countrymen to a record eighth successive league defeat.

The rain just about held off for the first half, but both sides struggled to escape the cloying centre of the field. Neither was helped by a propensity to suffler careless turnovers, particularly Richmond, although their ability at the lineout compensated handsomely.

In the second minute, a dazzling switch at the front of an attacking lineout set Richmond on their way. Barry Williams, throwing in, played a wall-pass off Craig Gillies, jumping at No 2, and then fed Craig Quinell, looping round, who touched down in the corner.

Williams was picking his men off at will in the lineout, but, from one rare scrappy throw in the twentieth minute, Adrian Davies broke free and fed Hutton, who seemed to knock on in the ensuing tackle. Nevertheless, Bateman was

allowed to score after Clarke hacked on.

Quinell then scored again off an immaculate lineout and drive before Richmond finally worked themselves into space on the firm outside just before half-time. Matthew Pini sliced through the Bristol defence on the left and carried the ball into the Bristol 22. His well-timed inside pass was collected by Dominic Chapman, whose electrifying pace produced a try.

After a half-time deluge, Pini broke again from his own half within a minute of the restart and found John Davies in support. The Wales prop charged into the Bristol 22 and fed his namesake, Adrian, who released Spencer Brown for a sparkling score.

That set the stage for Chapman to clinch a hat-trick of tries, both of the England A wing's second-half scores coming from mis-passes. The first released him on his own 22 and he skimmed over the sodden surface, deceiving three defenders with his pace and change of direction, to score a 70-yard try.

The completion of his hat-trick, in which he showed a similar turn of foot to round off another vibrant passage of play, brought an end to the game's scoring in the 56th minute. Thereafter, handling became well-nigh impossible and the game petered out.

SCORES: Richmond: tries: Quinell 2 (2min, 34), Bateman (20), Chapman 3 (40, 51, 58), Brown (41). Conversion: A Davies 4 (14min). Penalty goal: Hill (6).

SCORING SEQUENCE: (Richmond first) 5-0, 5-3, 12-3, 19-3, 26-3 (half-time), 31-3, 38-3, 45-3.

RICHMOND: M Pini, S Brown, A Bateman (capt), A Davies, A Moore, D McFarland (capt), D Chapman, S, S Williams (capt), A Collins, S, J Davies, C Quinell (capt), A Collins, S, C Collins, R Hutton (capt), C Palmer, S, A Vasey, B Clarke.

BRISTOL: P Hill, S Jones, S Martin, K Moggie, D Vasey, G Bator, R Jones (capt), M Armstrong, S, A Poole, F Landreau (capt), K Duns, S, K Palmer (capt), J Peng, S, C Eagle, T Devereux (capt), P Adams, 40, A Channon, D Corkery (capt), P Brownrigg, 54, E Riddell.

Referee: S Lander (Liverpool).

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CHANGING TIMES

BY PETER BRYAN

There may be mile upon mile of broken cobblesstones to negotiate and the constant threat of crashes, punctures and fractured bones to contend with, but then it is the cruel and unforgiving nature of the Paris-Roubaix cycle race that makes victory especially prized.

Success in a brutal event known as the "Hell of the North", guarantees a rider lasting fame. No matter what other trials and tribulations he may suffer, to be acclaimed in Roubaix's old velodrome places him among the legendary figures of the sport.

Since the race was first run in April 1906, with just 51 riders, it has become recognised as the roughest and toughest one-day event of the year. Even with modern suspension systems and more resilient equipment, the 265-kilometre classic remains a lottery.

Although loved and loathed in equal measure by modern professionals, they know that the race is a barometer of a champion's greatness. Eddie Merckx, winner on three occasions, loved it, but Bernard Hinault, like Merckx a five-time Tour de France champion, considered the event to be a cruel and archaic farce.

Under pressure from the French media, Hinault finally won in 1981. Although his chances were almost ruined after he swerved and crashed while avoiding a stray dog, Hinault proved his point, the Baston never lined up at the start again.

While motorway networks and TGV lines south of Lille have eradicated many of the old farm tracks that were in use 102 years ago, there are still enough sections of ruptured cobbles, or *pave*, to test the resolve of the most hardened professional.

In the early days, Paris-Roubaix attracted a mixture of mavericks and opportunists who would have been lost among the tactical complexities of present-day racing. On heavy, single-gearred, bone-shaking machines, they would push and shove their way over

CYCLING: PARIS-ROUBAIX RACE PROVIDES UNRELENTING TEST IN NORTHERN FRANCE AND

the muddy cobbles, a bottle of wine stuffed into a pocket of their twill jackets and a chunk of butter and pâté strapped to the handlebars.

It was the early 1920s when the route ran among the trenches and shell holes of a war-torn landscape, that the race came into its own. Betting on it was rife and, with big money involved, spoiling tactics became commonplace. Nails were thrown into the path of some of the favourites, while others were pulled from their bikes and their machines stolen or smashed.

Perhaps the most bizarre mishap befell Georges Passerieu in 1907, when, with victory in sight, he was asked to produce evidence of payment of taxes by an over-zealous gendarme. Luckily, the baffled Passerieu still had enough of an advantage to



Muscaturo: 1996 winner and favourite tomorrow

secure final victory. These days, the mixture of dung and mud thrown up from the ruptured roads and sardonically referred to by the riders as "Belgian toothpaste" is one of the few things that connect the elite with their pioneering predecessors.

The favourite for this year's race is Johan Museeuw, of Belgium, now dominating one-day racing much as Sean Kelly, of Ireland, did in the 1980s. Like Kelly, twice a winner in Roubaix, Museeuw's muscular style is suited perfectly to the brutal conditions of the pave.

Museeuw, who won the Tour of Flanders last weekend with a bold solo attack, won Paris-Roubaix two seasons ago, but that long-awaited success was tainted by a bitter public row within his team. When Museeuw found himself clear of the shattered field with two of his Italian teammates, a full-scale argument ensued — captured by television and radio crews following on motorcycles — as the trio disputed which of them should be "allowed" the honour of crossing the finishing line first.

Not surprisingly, it was the assertive Museeuw, a former world champion and the team leader, who took the chequered flag — but only after threatening his two teammates with redundancy. One of them, Gianluca Bortolami, left Museeuw's team soon after and has barely spoken to the Belgian to this day.

That begrudged success has dogged Museeuw ever since, but, at 32, his present ferocious form and unparalleled experience offer him the chance to set the record straight. Nevertheless, the pitfalls and potholes are sure to play a part in the final outcome.

There may no longer be flocks of sheep, stray horse or even overzealous tax inspectors barring the field's path, but tomorrow's champion will still have to master a lot of the singular demands posed by one of Europe's sport's most extraordinary events.



BY KEVIN FERRIE

JAMES BRINKLEY, who was released by Worcestershire last season, has been given an unexpected chance to play in the World Cup next year.

Brinkley, who was raised in Australia, made a spectacular start to his first-class career three years ago when he claimed six wickets for Worcestershire against Surrey at the Oval. However, he was unable to command a regular first-team place.

Brinkley was born in Helensburgh, Scotland, but moved to Australia when he was a year old. On leaving Worcestershire, he contacted **Jim Love**, the Scotland director of cricket, to advise him of his availability and he has now been included in the Scotland squad for their trip to Durham next weekend, where they are preparing for the forthcoming Benson and Hedges Cup.

"I think this could be the turning point of my career," he said. "The prospect of playing for my country is tremendously exciting, especially when one of our later Benson and Hedges Cup matches is against Worcestershire at New Road. It does seem a bit bizarre, though, that my failure to make it with the county has opened up chance to play in the World Cup."

By earning a World Cup place, he would have the chance to perform again in Australia, his adopted homeland, who will play Scotland at Worcester in the early stages of the tournament.

In the meantime, he is keeping up his Helensburgh connection by practising with Essex, where Peter Such, who was also born in the Dumfriesshire town, has been stalwart for many seasons. However, Brinkley said that his priority is to play for Scotland. "Even if Essex were to offer me a deal, Scotland would come first," he said.

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Goodwood celebrates Uncle Sam



Indy cars are the stars of this year's speed festival, says Alan Copps



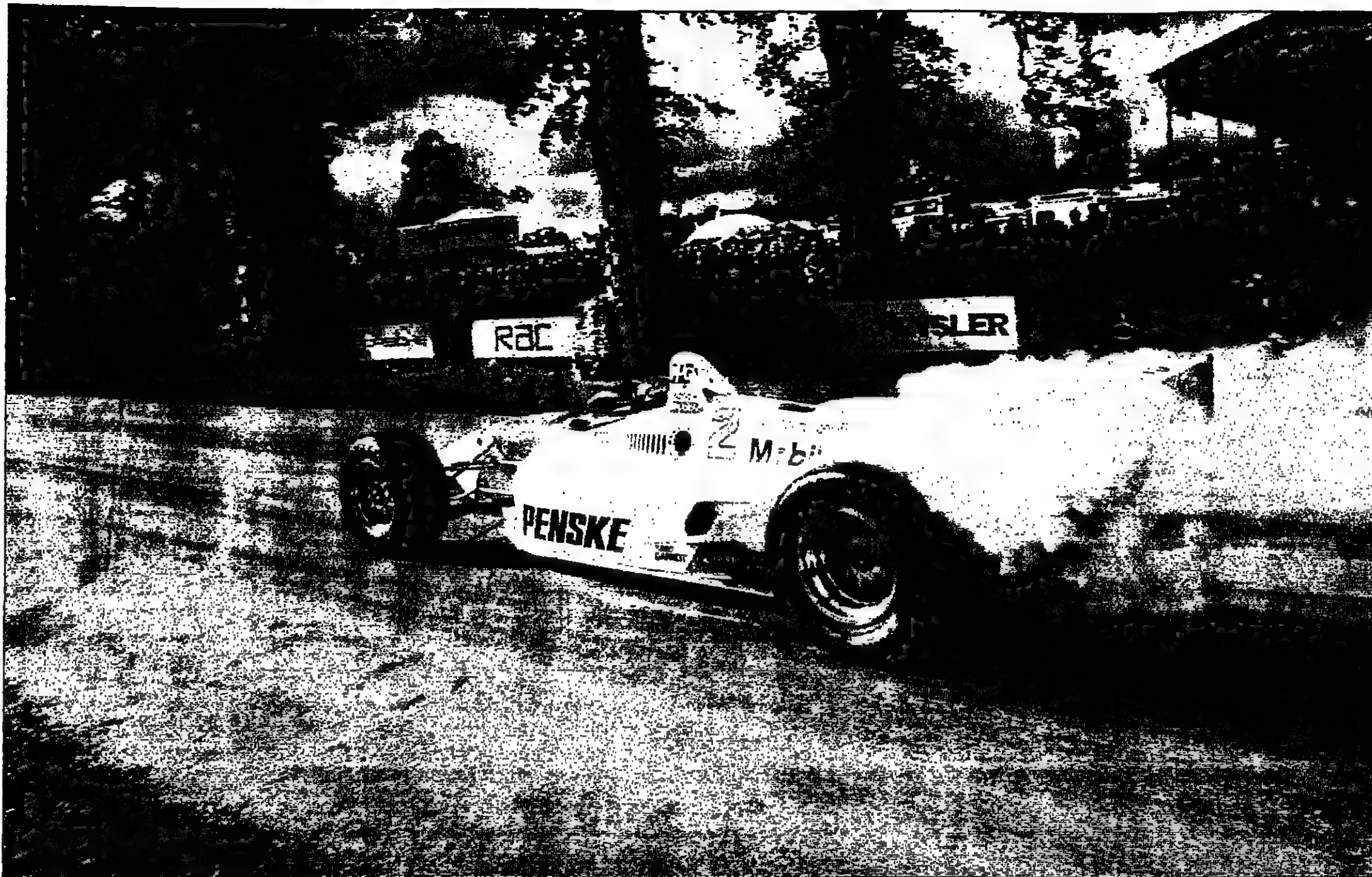
Goodwood organiser Lord March aboard a vintage BMW

There couldn't be a greater contrast: on one side of the Atlantic, the hothouse atmosphere of the "brickyard"—the oval Indianapolis track where the famous 500 is raced every year. On the other side the sylvan setting of Goodwood House, nestling in the Sussex Downs with its lane that snakes around a cricket pitch before climbing the hill beside a long flint wall.

Yet to the motorsport enthusiast both these places are shrines, and in June Goodwood will host a unique visit from the heroes of the brickyard. Indy car champions Mario Andretti, Al Unser Jr, Rick Mears and Bobby Rahal will be among those providing the entertainment at the Festival of Speed, matching chassis designed for outright speed and endurance on banking against the narrow confines of Goodwood's famous hill.

Goodwood is one of very few places in Europe where the roar of the Indycar has ever been heard; amid teeming rain last year, Emerson Fittipaldi made a spectacular sight in his Penske.

Modern Indycar racing, with its Lola and Reynard chassis and Ilmor engines, relies on similar technologies to Formula One, and its past is peppered with just as much glorious eccentricity. Among the older visitors in June will be at least one double-overhead-cam-



Emerson Fittipaldi makes a spectacular sight in his Penske Indycar amid teeming rain on the Goodwood hillclimb track last year. This year's event will reverberate to the roar of historic oval racers

shaft Peugeot that ran in the first 500 in 1911, and the 1913 Isotta Fraschini that driver Bill Gilhooly flipped over in front of the grandstand just before the finish. Even today a last lap incident at Indy is a "Gilhooly". The 1920 French Ballot that finished second, driven by René Thomas will also be there. It was bought by Malcolm Campbell and later raced at Brooklands.

Later cars will include the wonderfully original Alfa Romeo Tipo B that ran in 1939, 1946 and 1947 and has remained virtually untouched since. Its run up the Goodwood hill will be the first time it has roared in anger since its heyday. There will be the heroically noisy Novi Governor Special from 1946, a 1955 Kurtis-Offenhauser streamliner, a turbocharged Offenhauser of the type that Bobby Unser won the 1968 race in and several turbine-powered cars that featured at Indy in the late 1960s, including probably a Lotus 56 of the type raced by Graham Hill.

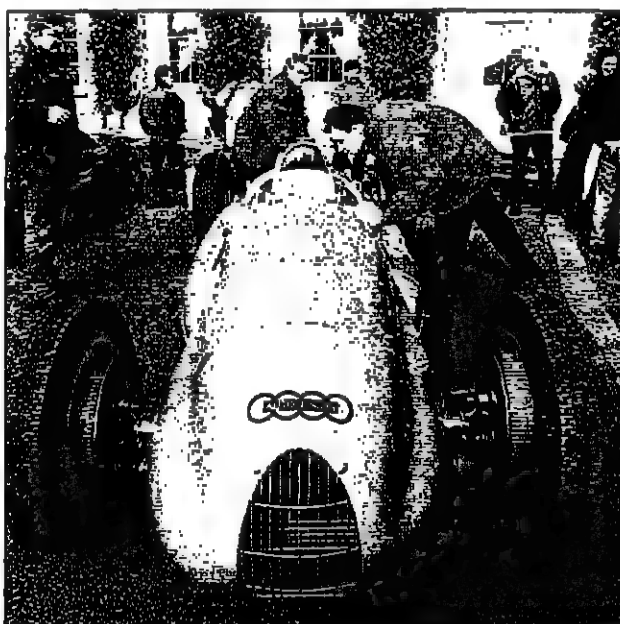
"Our tribute to Indycar will not only reflect our theme of The Innovation Years but will also be a real thrill for the crowd," says Lord March, who founded the festival in 1993 and has presided over its growth into motorsport's equivalent to Henley or Wimbledon.

Walking round the Goodwood paddock and exhibition areas gets you closer to fabulous cars and legendary drivers than anywhere else. Those who will be in action include Stirling Moss, Tony Brooks, Sir Jack Brabham, John Surtees, Phil Hill and Roy Salvadori. There will be current Formula One cars from runaway championship leaders McLaren, and drivers will include Johnny Herbert, probably driving a Lotus as part of the tribute to that marque's 50th anniversary. Other significant anniversaries, sure to bring out spectacular and rarely seen cars are 50 years of Porsche

(for which Jacky Ickx is among the drivers), 50 years of the Jaguar XK and 75 years of BMW motorcycles.

Audi will be celebrating the restoration of another of the famous prewar Silver Arrows, a 1936 V16 Auto Union C-type, with touring-car stars Frank Biela and Emanuele Pirro sharing that car and the 1938 V12 D-type. The rally sprint event will feature Ford's World Rally car and the rally version of the Puma coupé.

Chief among the historic bikes on show will be the only F model Norton, which was put into store after just one test run on the day in 1954 that the company abandoned its world championship programme. A stunning example of the dedication of past champions, it has just been restored by John Surtees, seven times motorcycle world champion and the only man to add a car title to that feat, with the help of works team mechanic Charlie Edwards, the only survivor of the original design team.



1938 Auto Union D-Type V12 will be shown by Audi

FESTIVAL OFFER

■ THE BEST way to see the festival is to make a weekend of it, and today *The Times* offers a chance to do so in style. Readers who book tickets for Saturday and Sunday and send this panel with their application will save £5 on the normal £40 advance price, and go into a prize draw for a weekend for two.

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Rebirth of an electrifying circuit

Alan Copps tries the rebuilt historic racetrack

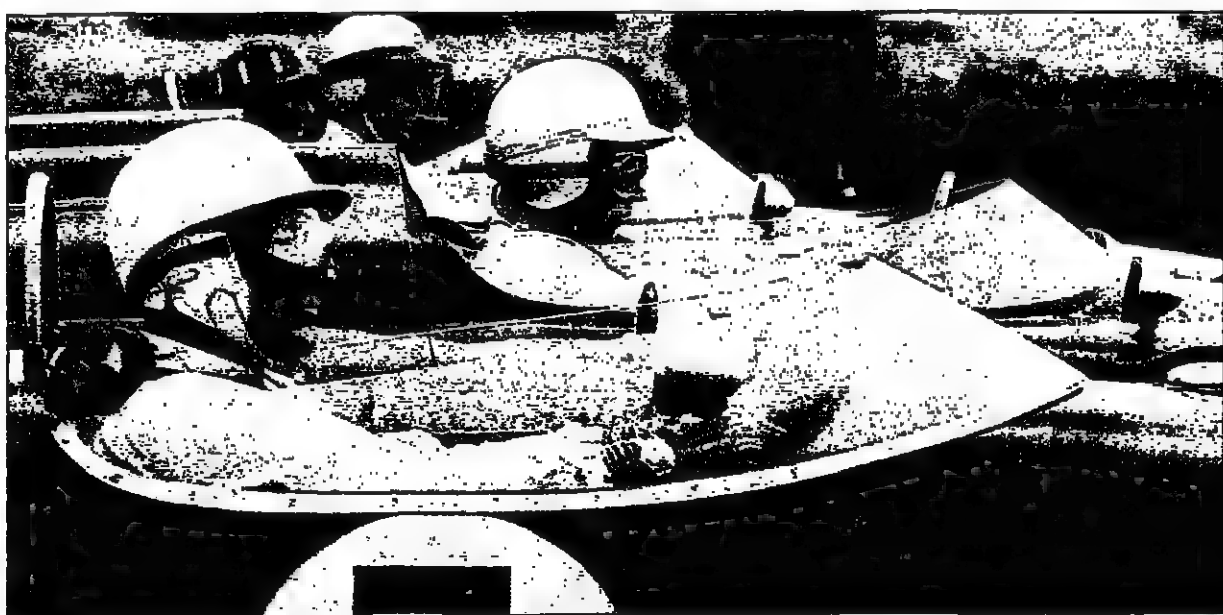
THIS YEAR the Festival of Speed is joined by what promises to be another outstanding event on the Goodwood calendar. In September, for the first time in more than 30 years, the Goodwood Motor Circuit will again resound to car and motorcycle racing.

The place where Stirling Moss, Tony Brooks, Roy Salvadori and a host of other star names scored their first wins is being revived as a home purely for historic racing, one of the most rapidly growing attractions in motorsport. Complaints about boring-looking cars and lack of overtaking are all too familiar at modern meetings.

But the revived Goodwood will lay claim to being the most authentic of all circuits for historic racing, which recreates the days when skill and courage could still defeat advanced technology.

While the star drivers of the postwar decades are among the most fervent proponents of this form of racing, it is not just a matter of nostalgia. Some of the most enthusiastic drivers were hardly born when Goodwood closed, and some of those collectors who have done so much to preserve and restore the cars are too young to remember the original races.

The restoration of the circuit has taken just over a year—amazingly fast work after four years of negotiations with local authorities. By the



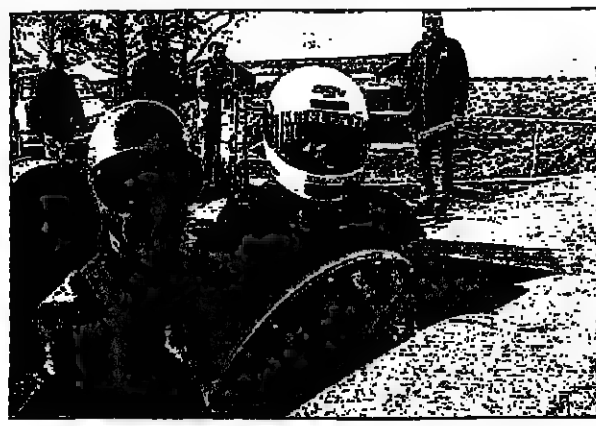
Days of the greats: Moss, Surtees, Salvadori and Hill line up. Stars such as these scored their first wins at the circuit

time the revival meeting opens on September 18, 50 years to the day since the circuit first opened, more than 270,000 tonnes of earth will have been poured into a sound-deadening bank around the track. New safety barriers will have consumed 27,000 old tyres, six miles of fencing will have been put up and 20,000 trees and 18,000 ivy plants, to cloak the tyre walls will have been planted.

Of all the circuits used for historic racing, Goodwood has changed least from its original layout, which was based on the disused wartime airfield of Westhampnett by Freddie March, Brooklands racer and grandfather of the present Earl of March, who has overseen the restoration.

A quick lap or two in the passenger seat of an immaculately restored Aston Martin

DB3S with Tony Brooks, wearing period helmet and goggles at the wheel, was enough to vouch for the authenticity of the circuit. Four-wheel drifting through corners, braking hard from 140mph at the end of the



Tony Brooks and Alan Copps drive the restored track

Lavant straight and neatly snaking through the chicane, there was no doubt that after just a few laps in a car he hadn't seen since 1956, the man Stirling Moss regards as one of his greatest rivals was settling back into the groove

on the circuit where his career began.

Brooks, Moss, Salvadori, John Surtees, Phil Hill, Dan Gurney and Derek Bell are among those invited to take part on September 18, 19 and 20. There will be classes for sports cars, sports-racers, closed GT, Formula 1 and 2 cars, saloons, motorcycles and sidecars, and every vehicle will have to pass a test of authenticity. Intriguingly, handicap races of the kind for which the circuit was famous are also promised, involving cars of different types.

For those who want to support this event and the Festival of Speed, a Goodwood Road Racing Club has been formed. Club and ticket information are available from the Goodwood Road Racing Company (see festival offer panel).

Next chance saloon

Ferrari driver tells Vaughan Freeman of Volvo move

WHEN Formula One champion and Indycar hero Nigel Mansell tried his hand at saloon car racing in 1993 the results were spectacular and embarrassing, as "our Nigel" wrote off his BTCC Mondeo after just a few laps.

Now he has pledged to drive again for Ford at three meetings this season. And beside him on the grid he will find another ex-Formula One racer, Gianni Morbidelli, who is switching to BTCC in the Volvo team alongside the Swede Rickard Rydell, who finished fourth in last year's championship.

Ford will have to make dramatic improvements if Mansell is to challenge the Volvo drivers, who have been among the fastest in pre-season tests and whose cars, prepared by TWR, will again be carrying the Times logo when the season starts this weekend at Thruxton.

Morbidelli is now in the ideal position to look back, with some anger but a lot of affection at an F1 career that began almost a decade ago. He had just turned 20 when the dream drive for any Italian racer materialised, and he was recruited as an F1 test driver with Ferrari. The move followed teenage success and world titles as a karting champion before he became the Italian and European F3 champion in 1989. His F1 career highlight



Whole new game, boy: Morbidelli relaxes at home

was not in a Ferrari though, but a less glamorous Footwork-Hart Arrows, when he secured his only podium place with third at the 1995 Australian Grand Prix.

Morbidelli also raced and tested with Jordan-Peugeot, Minardi and Sauber, but an F1 seat seemed easier to come by than F1 success so now, aged 30, he is making the switch. How will racing in BTCC differ?

MORBIDELLI says: "F1 cars are rear-wheel drive; BTCC cars are front-wheel drive, so with a BTCC car when you get oversteer you cannot control it with the power. With F1 cars you have 700bhp compared with 300bhp with BTCC, but that does not mean it is easier. You have to be very smooth. If you are aggressive you lose time."

"Some people think that because there is less power it is easier. It absolutely is not. With less power every little mistake can lose you a lot of time," he adds. "In F1 the brakes are so powerful you can stop the car from flat out

in 50 metres, and to push the brakes is difficult because you have to exert 70kg of pressure."

"If you exert that pressure in a BTCC car you just lock the front brakes. If you try to brake in BTCC as late as in F1 you will crash on the first corner."

Fitness will be as important in BTCC as it was for Morbidelli in F1: "You have got to be in good physical shape for F1 and for BTCC. For F1 I made sure I was in shape, because it is very demanding physically with all the g-forces, and also sometimes in the cockpit it can reach 60 or 70 degrees centigrade."

"With F1 especially, you need to prepare the neck muscles, so I work half an hour in the gym just on the neck using weights or cords attached to a helmet. In F1 your heart rate stays at around 170bpm for the whole race, an hour and 45 minutes, which is high. Even marathon runners only get their heart rate up to around 140-150 beats per minute."

Mobile holiday homes can be great fun — so long as you are not the poor wretch trying to have a good time in the face of wind, rain and family rows

Why caravans are not a total drag

The coastal town where I live does not have any large caravan sites, which, as regular readers will know, is a source of great sadness to me: there is nothing I enjoy more than being in a country lane behind a mobile Nissan hut with the aerodynamics of an elephant and the elegance of a Virnie Jones tackle. Still, one cannot have everything in life. There is the compensation of a few small caravan sites, run by farmers under the set-aside scheme: they have set aside a couple of fields for caravans as an easier way of making money than growing vegetables that nobody wants or grazing cows that show every sign of having gone soft in the head. These sites often have entrances that enable drivers towing caravans to give a lengthy exhibition of their reversing skills.

DRIVEN TO DISTRACTION

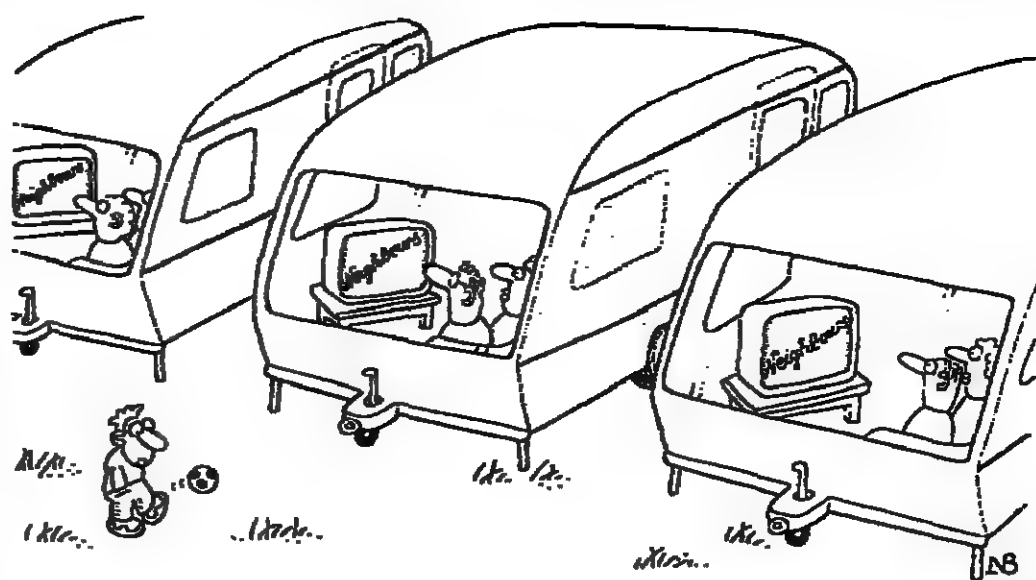


Peter Barnard

assisted by the shouts and hand signals of local residents who look forward to the Easter arrival of these travelling entertainers.

With the right camera equipment you can achieve some wonderful effects by photographing the seasonal April halloos bouncing on the caravan roofs: do try to include the terrified faces at the caravan window, convinced that their holiday home is being machine-gunned.

Some people get annoyed at the number of caravans on the roads, but bored children looking for new methods of entertainment can be kept quiet for hours with a game this column is shortly to patent. It works well in a strong crosswind and involves the players having to decide which lane a car and caravan will be visiting next and whether the car will occupy one lane while the caravan is in a different one. Variants include a bonus-point system: a child who spots a caravan parked on the hard shoulder in which someone is



boiling a kettle or watching a football match on a portable television screen.

Sometimes caravans can serve an important road-safety function, which is why I am only too pleased when an underpowered car hoves into view pulling an oversized van, for this will serve to slow down the 10,000 vehicles travelling behind the caravan, thus ensuring that the

speed limit is rigorously enforced. I expect that the Association of Chief Police Officers holds an annual charity event in aid of the Caravan Club of Great Britain.

Mind you, the role of the caravaner in crawling about the road network adding to everyone else's enjoyment may assist the police in one way but they don't half add to the criminal statistics

once they come to a halt. An insurance company survey recently found that 5,000 caravans are broken into every summer (there are no figures for the number of people trying to break out). The caravans are most at risk when they are parked outside their owners' houses, which may explain why caravanners are so keen to keep on the move.

When they are not moving, caravanners are parked in "beauty spots", where they gaze through the rain at the particularly beautiful caravan parked six feet away. Those who say caravanners are mad to go to places where all they can see are other caravans have missed an important point: because of the weather, most caravanners spend their holiday watching television and some of the scenery in Sir David Attenborough's wildlife films is quite breathtaking.

And then there is the element of tradition. All around the caravan site can be heard the sounds that make up the English rural idyll: children twittering ceaselessly, parents barking at each other about who left the Gameboy console on the dining room table 520 miles away, the community spirit engendered as search parties set off in pursuit of escaped pets.

If this imagery has so whetted your appetite that you cannot imagine how you have survived thus far without a caravan, I suggest you lie down in a darkened room for a couple of hours. If the urge does not go away, visit a showroom immediately and spend an hour in a caravan with three children and a dog. That usually does the trick.

Buying a classic cat's no mad jag

Michael Evans found swapping his Ford Sierra for an 11-year-old XJ12 limousine made perfect sense

I wasn't easy exchanging my six-year-old Ford Sierra for an 11-year-old near-classic Jaguar Sovereign XJ12 with leather upholstery, pepper-pot wheels, electric everything and cruise control. It took a chat with a friend who had already indulged, and a two-hour session with one of the country's leading experts in second-hand Jags to convince me.

What makes a man turn to a Jaguar after many years of driving, in chronological order, an Allegro, a Renault 12, a Ford Cortina, a brown (brown) Sierra, a black Sierra GLS and a grey 2.3 Sierra?

Before coming to the obvious conclusion, I have to say that I started my driving life at the age of 18 in an Austin Sheerline limousine which had headlamps twice the size of the ones on my Jaguar and even more legroom. The glamour of the Sheerline provided a benchmark that has clearly remained with me ever since.

There was nothing wrong with the Sierra: it had given me trouble-free, no-nonsense motoring since I bought it in 1991. But it was time for an exchange. After visiting a Ford main dealer and examining a fairly fancy one costing about £17,000, I decided I could do better... and cheaper.

Buying a Jaguar involves a number of apparent contradictions. Far too expensive, I was warned, terrible on petrol, a nightmare to insure, too big, too fat, a car for crooks.

Well, it is big but certainly not fat. It has lines that most modern cars only dream about. It is more expensive on petrol than the Sierra and uses four-star leaded in its twin tanks, but, provided you don't drive like a maniac, the V12 is not nearly as thirsty as I thought it would be, and of course, the smaller-engined Jags, like the 4.2, have better fuel consumption.

With less than 24,000 miles on the clock — it was owned by an elderly gentleman from new and driven sparingly by a chauffeur — the Jag was on sale for £11,000 (far more

tempting than the £17,000 Mondeo). The seller, Robert Hughes, who runs a classic Jaguar business in Weybridge, Surrey, said the annual service costs would be about £230, spares were plentiful and tyres would be cheap. Fully comprehensive insurance was £300 a year through the Jaguar Car Club; the Sierra was costing me £490.

Robert Hughes knows his Jags. He is an acknowledged authority and keeps them by the two dozen in a warehouse. He has just written a book, *Jaguar/Daimler — An Appreciation of Production Models, 1960-1970*.

Once resolved to make the jump from family saloon to luxury, powerful motoring, the tricky thing is to decide which model to buy. The Series 1 XJ6 Jags, from 1968 to late 1973, have the classiest front and a stylish walnut dashboard, the Series 2 from 1973 to early 1979 is probably the cheapest to run and the most practical, and has more refined heating and steering. The Series 3, from 1979 to 1986, has fuel injection and even more refinements.

I went to Weybridge with the idea of looking at (not buying) a Series 3 XJ6 4.2, and ended up buying a dark grey Series 3 XJ12 Sovereign H2 (high fuel efficiency).

Driving the Jag is like entering a different world. It smells different and feels different. You can sense the weight, especially if both tanks are full, but with relatively light steering and the pleasure that you derive from knowing that a beautifully crafted V12 engine is sitting under the polished bonnet — as well as the comforting fact that Jaguar installed certain safety features before other manufacturers even thought about them — the heaviness of the car becomes a positive feature.

The Budget could have knocked the smile off my face. There had been speculation that the Chancellor planned to introduce a graded system for road tax, the bigger the engine, the larger the tax. But while he increased the price of

petrol, and promised a £50 tax break for small cars, Gordon Brown resisted the temptation to punish the big-car owners with a steep rise in road tax... at least for this year.

I began by deciding to use the Jaguar only for "proper" journeys, like weekend trips but I soon changed my mind. It was spending far too much time sitting outside the house. Now I use it as often as possible, including driving to work on occasions and popping the youngest son to school. He loves it.

To test its motoring qualities more thoroughly, I took the Jag to France for three days and drove it in leisurely fashion — most of the time — to Les Andelys, near Rouen. Occasionally, to pass a tractor trailer heaped with bales of hay, I pressed the accelerator enthusiastically and was rewarded with a surge of speed power that you could feel the kick even through the firm leather upholstery. The straight French roads were swallowed up but the increased noise from the engine was almost imperceptible.

The classic lines of the Jaguar impressed everyone in Les Andelys, more accustomed to coughing Deux Chevaux and zippy Peugeots. I parked it in the inner gravelled courtyard of my hotel and when I left, reversing it slowly through an ancient arch, several of the staff came out to watch.

I reprimanded them gently, reminding them that only the previous year I had reversed out of the same courtyard in my Sierra but no one came to see me off.

"Mais oui, monsieur, mais c'est un Jaguar. n'est-ce pas? C'est différent," said the waiter. Vive la difference, I thought.

Robert Hughes Autos 01932 888381. His book is available from bookshops or Starling Distribution, 01932 820214.

IN BRIEF

Rallying round for a wee dram

SCOTCH corners are lying in wait for nearly 100 vintage and classic cars taking part in Scotland's newest motoring event from May 2-7. Competitors from 13 countries driving 20 makes of car are to join the Classic Malt Scotch Six-Day Reliability Trial, run by the Historic Endurance Rallying Organisation. Here, and will take in classic malt whisky distilleries.

Noël's Merc

SIR Noël Coward's specially built 1967 Mercedes-Benz 250SE Cabriolet is among the vehicles to be auctioned by Brooks at the Mercedes-Benz museum in Stuttgart, Germany, next Saturday. Sir Noël, who had the car delivered to his home beside Lake Geneva, owned it until his death in 1973. Also on sale is a 1910 Mercedes-Simplex 14/30 six-seater tourer thought to be the earliest survivor of its type.

Bike cover

MOTORCYCLE insurer, Hastings Direct, has launched a scheme to give bikers the sort of cover motorists have long enjoyed. It includes a 24-hour helpline, free collection and delivery within a 30-mile radius, storage of damaged bikes, two-year guarantee on repairs, and lifetime warranty on paint. For information call: 01424 735735.



Michael Evans, wife Nicky, and the Jaguar he bought with only 24,000 miles on the clock. It has proved a favourite for the school run

UNLEADED THREAT

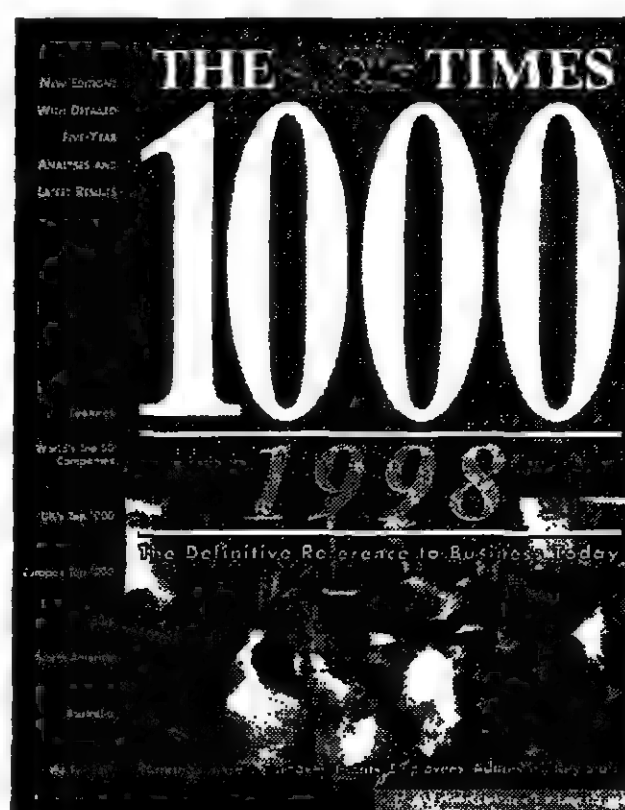
WHAT if the Jaguar's diet of four-star leaded petrol is prohibited under new European Union laws and only unleaded fuel is left on sale? Robert Hughes says there are a number of options: since 1967, Jaguars have been fitted with sintered (hardened) valve seats and could run on super octane unleaded petrol, provided the ignition timing is retarded slightly.

JAGUAR does not recommend running these cars on ordinary premium unleaded, but Robert Hughes says it is possible to fit hardened valve seats, valve guides and exhaust valves for about £600 for a 4.2 model and £1,000 for a V12.

IN THE United States and Germany there are already fuel additives that do the trick. Although there is no suitable additive available in Britain at present, there is every reason to believe that if four-star leaded is banned, similar additives will be on sale in this country.

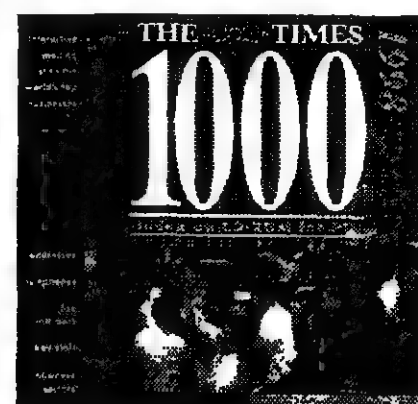
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CHEVROLET THE WORLD'S FIRST TURBO-CHARGED PRODUCTION CAR WAS A VERSION OF THE CHEVROLET CORVETTE



ON GUARD 59

Will the PIA act over charges on annuity sales?

WEEKEND MONEY

EASTER URGE 52

Now is the time to spring into financial action



Lizanne Rose says disreputable selling techniques mask the benefits of competition

Sales methods of gas suppliers fuel controversy

The annual cost is based on an average gas user of 20,964 kWh of gas per year paying each month or quarter after receiving their bill and includes standing charges and 5 per cent VAT. March 1998 tariffs.

Gas Supplier	Price per kWh (pence)	Standing Charge (£)	Annual Cost (£)	Saving Over British Gas (%)
Amerade Standard Saver	1.200	35.59	301.52	17
Beacon Gas Economy	1.300	28.00	313.46	13
British Gas Standard	1.340	none	294.97	19
British Gas Standard	1.413	48.87	362.35	
Calor Gas Saver	1.257	37.50	318.07	13
Eastern Natural Gas	1.185	31.02	293.42	19
London Total Energy	1.250	35.04	311.95	14
Midland Gas	1.180	32.85	294.34	19
Northern Electric Quarterly	1.180	30.86	291.94	19
Norweb Plan C	1.233	31.44	304.42	16
Scottish Power Standard Package	1.250	37.41	314.44	13
Southern Electric Gas Quarterly Saver	1.198	41.58	307.37	15
Starling Gas	1.200	29.00	290.40	20
SWALEC Gas	1.189	30.33	293.57	19
SWALEC Gas Quarterly	1.200	35.59	301.52	17
York Gas Quarterly standard credit	1.175	35.70	298.13	18
Yorkshire Electricity Standard	1.190	35.59	299.74	17

NOTES
 1 Prices listed according to usage band.
 2 You get a prompt-payment discount of £7.87 a quarter if you pay your bills within 10 days of the billing date.
 3 There are three standard credit packages: Standard Package, Payment Card and Budget Scheme. All have the same tariffs and standing charges.
 Direct Debit payment will usually be cheaper but is sometimes only available with certain tariffs or payment plans. Costs for gas users with prepayment tariffs are also structured differently. Source: Which?

HOW much cheaper does it work out to use an alternative supplier to British Gas? To calculate how much cheaper it would be for you to switch, look at your gas bills for the past four quarters and add the total kWh figures to give your annual gas use. Then multiply your annual

gas usage in kWh by the "price per kWh" listed in our Gas Suppliers Cost Comparison table and divide it by 100 to get the price in pence. Lastly add this to the standing charge (if there is one) and then add 5 per cent VAT to give each company's total annual charge.

As competition in the gas industry grows, switching from British Gas to a rival supplier could save you up to 20 per cent on your gas bill. If you have not already had a salesman calling at your home to persuade you to switch, you soon will. However, since the industry was opened up to competition two years ago, consumer watchdogs have been deluged with complaints over standards of service and the selling techniques used by some of the new companies.

Among the underhand tactics employed by door-to-door salesmen are preposterous tales of how British Gas has gone out of business, been handed back to China and even run out of gas pipes. The Gas Consumers Council (GCC) has evidence of elderly and vulnerable people being duped into switching suppliers after being spun a yarn on their front doorstep.

There have been complaints of double billing, refusing to quote prices, misleading or inaccurate quotations, heavy cancellation charges and disputed fees for work carried out. Some of the high-pressure sales tactics are employed by agents working on behalf of the suppliers who have little or no experience in the field.

So far, three million out of a total of 19 million private customers have switched to a new gas provider. Because of the numbers involved, competition has been rolled out gradually by regions. The latest stage began a fortnight ago in Cheshire and South Yorkshire. West Midlands and Wales follow this month and the rest of the country, including London, on May 23.

Northern Electric shock for customers



Switched: Carolyn Scrivener with son Scott, 4, and daughter Chloe, 14

A salesman from Northern Electric called on Carolyn Scrivener, of Wallington, Surrey, a month ago. "I assumed he was from British Gas; he didn't mention at any time that he was representing another company." The salesman was with Mrs Scrivener for a matter of minutes. "He asked to read my meter, which of course I let him. Afterwards, he talked about British Gas and said that I had to re-sign my contract to confirm that I wished to stay with them. I never presumed, and he never said, that he planned to switch me to another supplier."

Mrs Scrivener realised her mistake only last week and re-examined the contract. Not only had the salesman signed her up for gas with Northern Electric, but for electricity as well. "I contacted the Gas Consumers Council who were very helpful in explaining what action I should take. I sent back my contract. Even if their gas is cheaper, I didn't like the way they came across."

A spokesman for Northern Electric said: "We take reports of agents pressurising customers very seriously. Mrs Scrivener's contract will be terminated immediately and we will contact her very soon."

involves telling British Gas, paying the final bill and then the new supplier when necessary. BG Transco will continue to provide the emergency service for reported gas escapes.

Before a provider is allowed to sell gas to domestic customers it must be licensed. Each company has to pass checks on its financial health and show that it has adequate gas to meet the potential needs of customers. Harder to control are the less scrupulous selling tactics.

Sue Slipman, GCC director, is alarmed by some doorstep selling. She said: "The most worrying reports are of the harassment and intimidation of the elderly and vulnerable, such as those with learning difficulties."

The Office of Gas Supply (Ofgas), the industry regulator, is trying to clamp down on misleading and there is now a strict code of practice. Clare

Spottiswoode - who, as Director-General of Gas Supply, runs Ofgas - has pledged to crack down on salesmen prone to exaggerating the benefits of changing company. She said: "Our research shows that most people welcome doorstep selling. However, sales agents who mislead are being swiftly identified and dealt with."

Contracts sold on the door-

step do have a cooling-off period. If you send for information about a gas company using a coupon from a newspaper or sign an information request from a doorstep salesman, make sure you are only asking for information and have not signed a contract, and keep a record of the company's name. Customers can also complain directly to Ofgas or the Gas

Consumers Council. To choose which gas company provides the best deal for your individual needs, you should contact the suppliers directly. Our table below shows the current licensed gas companies available and the cost of gas per kWh.

The GCC is advising customers to make a like-for-like comparison and to shop around. British Gas, which is urging the same approach, does admit that some providers' tariffs are on average up to 7 per cent lower. But it also says that the cheapest price does not necessarily offer the best value.

While Ofgas can provide further information and advice, it cannot recommend which gas company to choose. For factsheets on domestic gas competition and suppliers, or to register a complaint of misleading, call 0800-887 777. The Gas Consumers Council is on 0645-060 708.

HOW TO ESTIMATE YOUR ANNUAL USAGE				
Type of property	Occupants	Heating only (kWh)	Cooking only (kWh)	Heating & Cooking (kWh)
3-bedroomed flat	2	11,311	1,193	12,505
3-bed terrace (built 1945-65)	3	14,934	1,383	16,317
3-bed terrace (built 1965-1985)	4	20,649	1,634	22,283
Semi-detached 3-bed house (built 1945-1985)	4	22,348	1,634	23,982
Detached 3-bed house (1945-1985)	5	31,119	1,704	32,823

*Source: Micropal, offer to bid, income taken, for period 1/7/1996 to 1/3/98 (equivalent 5 year figure +85.73%, 1/3/93 to 1/3/98). *Source: Micropal, all figures offer to bid, gross income reinvested, for periods ending 1/3/98. Past performance is not necessarily a guide to the future. The price of units and the income from them is not guaranteed and can fall as well as rise. The Equity Income Trust has been available as a PEP since May 1993. Full written terms and conditions are available on request. For your security, all calls are recorded. Royal & Sun Alliance Unit Trust Management Limited, registered in England, no 2170242, is a member of the Royal & Sun Alliance Life & Pensions Marketing Group. Registered Office 1 Bartholomew Lane, London, EC2N 2AB. Members of the Royal & Sun Alliance Life & Pensions Marketing Group are regulated by the Personal Investment Authority, solely for life assurance, pensions and unit trust business, and by IMRO.

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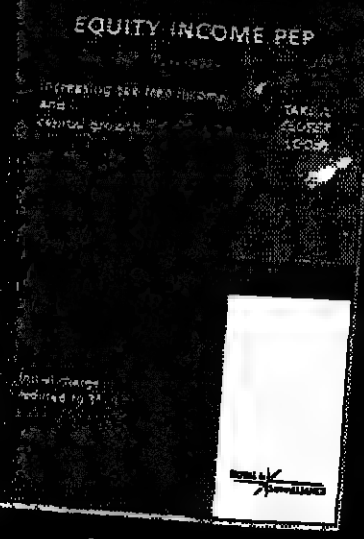
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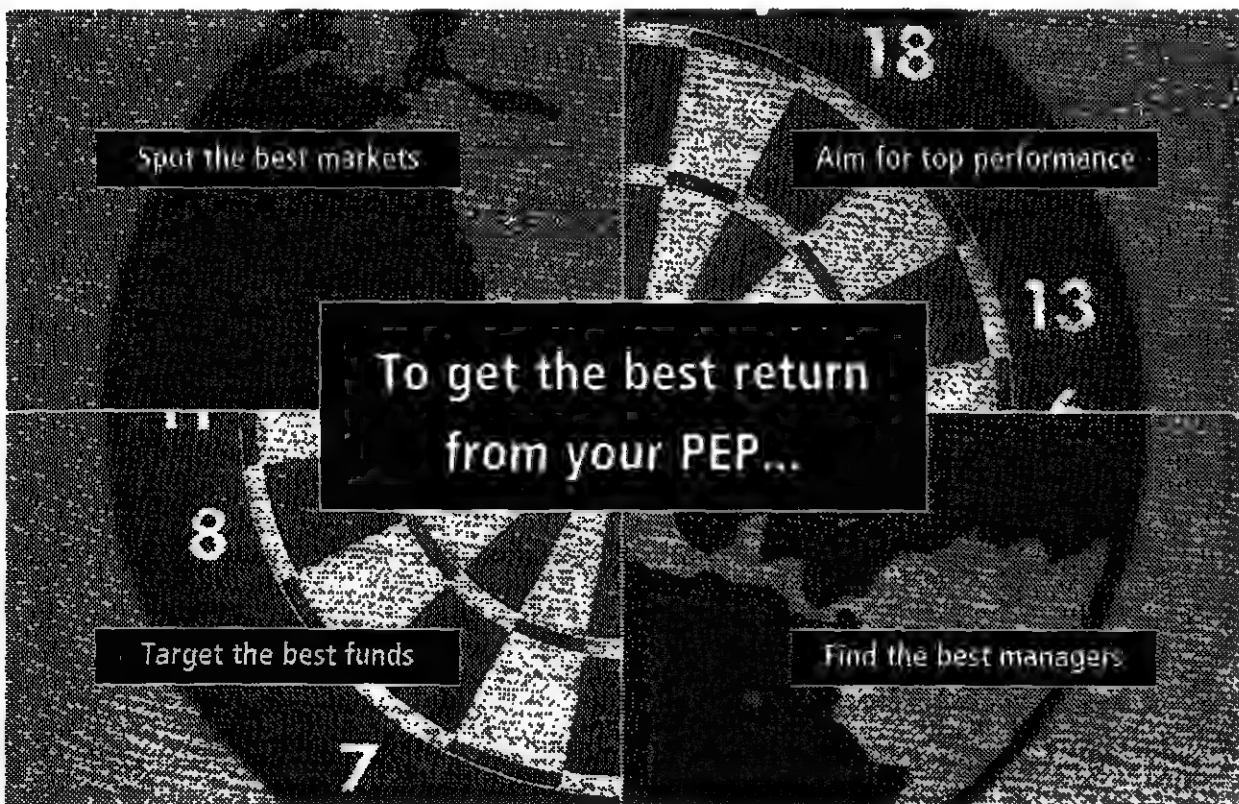
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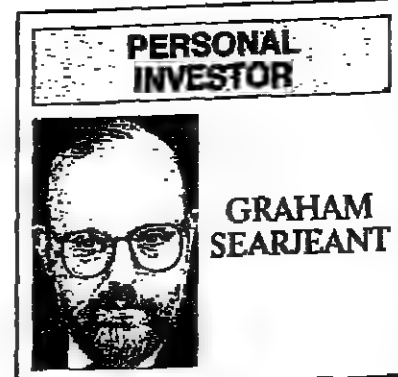
A new era of global super-mergers was opened up this week, when America's Citicorp agreed an £85 billion merger with Travelers, the insurance group that owns the Salomon investment bank. Or so goes the hype.

Surely, any new era must have started less inspiringly with the grander £100 billion merger agreed between Glaxo-Wellcome and SmithKline Beecham. Only, as we know, that founded on the traditional merger issue: who is to get the jobs? That is no problem in a hostile takeover, as Wellcome seniors found.

The short-term benefit of scrapping loads of seemingly overlapping jobs is measurable. It needed to be, for instance, to pay Wellcome shareholders their takeover premium, even if that might have been higher but for the biggest shareholder's yen to be gone. Any long-term loss, for instance in drugs that are never invented, comes later if at all.

There comes a point, however, when a hostile takeover becomes so expensive that the buyer's shareholders cannot afford to take the risk. The bigger the target company, the more successful it is and the more it depends on mobile people rather than owned assets or rights, the riskier it becomes to pay a huge takeover premium upfront. That is why Travelers, Glaxo and the big Swiss banks opted for "mergers of equals" effected by a share swap.

So many mergers end in tears, however, that shareholders need to be clear about the benefits in advance. In the case of Glaxo/SmithKline, they were clear. The merged company aimed to save £1.5 billion a year in overlapping



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costs. In theory that might add up to £25 billion to the equity value, before the heavy one-off costs of scrapping people's jobs. No wonder many investors are incensed by the failure of boards that wallow in pay to do the deal and prove their worth. So far, Glaxo has understandably been reluctant to make a hostile bid for its slightly less huge rival.

The Travelers/Citicorp combine would have little business overlap, removing easy gains in shareholder value as well as the corresponding conflict and turmoil. On that front at least, the chances of the 50-50 deal going ahead look better. The supposed benefits lie in cross-selling, all-in capacity across the continents and sheer size. They proved just as alluring. Shares in both companies rose strongly, as did Glaxo Wellcome and SmithKline Beecham.

Investors clearly have faith in the benefits of global mega-mergers. They are almost compelled to do so. The prospect of vast value-creating deals is

needed to justify ever-rising share ratings on both sides of the Atlantic. Banking and pharmaceuticals have been lead sectors of the share boom. In pharmaceuticals, pressure on healthcare costs makes it imperative to spread overheads and develop a continuous pipeline of new, if sometimes modest, drugs. In banking, lenders to multinational groups claim they need global capacity, though that is only clear in investment banking.

In many other sectors, however, the arguments for world companies are, according to taste, equally compelling or spurious. Overhead costs of new products dictate this in the motor industry. The race to ape Coca-Cola suggests that branded consumer goods are strong candidates, not least because of global marketing at sporting events such as the Olympics or motor grands prix. Communications services increasingly know no borders other than language.

On a rough count, some two thirds of the companies in the FTSE 100 share index of top corporates are either potential building blocks for a worldwide business or are the product of past globalisation. Retailing, building materials and infrastructure utilities seem the main exceptions.

That test also shows that this is no guaranteed route to good returns – unless your company is taken over for cash. Many leviathans, for instance in oil, banking or motors, have proved too slow to change and have endured long periods of stagnation and low returns. But the board usually does well.

Gavin Lumsden on society moves to keep carpetbaggers at bay

Doors open — for some

Britannia and Yorkshire building societies reopened their doors to small savers this week but made it clear they do not want money from carpetbaggers.

Both societies have reduced opening balances on their instant access accounts from £2,000 to £100 in an attempt to return to business as usual after they were forced to raise minimum investment levels last year to fend off the army of speculators who besieged their offices in search of the next demutualisation.

Although conversion speculation has cooled down from last year's feverish levels, neither society is relaxing its guard against carpetbaggers. New members will be required to give any windfall to charity if their society converts within five years of an account being opened. Both have set up charitable foundations for the money in the "unlikely" event of a conversion.

New members will still have a right to vote and have their say in the societies' affairs and be entitled to any payout after the five years.

David Anderson, chief executive of the Yorkshire said: "We have been searching for a way to allow everyone access to our competitive interest rates whilst avoiding the disruption which has resulted from speculative account opening in the past."

The move does not affect the existing 2.8 million mem-



bers of Britannia and Yorkshire. Both societies are winding down deposit accounts which do not confer society membership to savers, having introduced them last year as another measure to deter speculators. However, under the 1997 Building Societies Act such accounts will become illegal later this year.

The five-year qualifying period for new members is an

improvement on Nationwide's stance. Since October it has required new members to relinquish windfalls for all time.

Mr Anderson said: "We took the view that we did not want two permanent classes of membership. We considered introducing bonuses for long-term savers but we thought that would discourage new savers." However,

the Bradford & Bingley Building Society was critical of any attempt to ring-fence new investors.

Christopher Rodrigues, the society's chief executive, said: "What business are we in? Why on earth should we want to deter people from putting their money with us?"

"People can open up an account with us for any reason they like. We are not going to convert."

To underline its renewed focus on smaller savers, Yorkshire has launched a three-year regular savings account starting at £10 per month. This pays gross annual interest of 7.8 per cent (6.24 per cent net) if 12 monthly deposits are made. However, if a payment is missed or the money is withdrawn the gross rate halves to 3.9 per cent. Britannia, meanwhile, is reopening its regular savings account, which pays 7.75 per cent gross, for monthly payments from £20 to £500.

Both societies are taking action on Tessa and postal accounts as well. Yorkshire has reduced minimum investment levels on its 7.9 per cent Tessa Plus from £2,000 to £100, compared with the £250 needed for Britannia's Fled Tessa. Opening balances on Yorkshire postal accounts have been brought down from £3,000 to £2,000, and for the Britannia from £5,000 to £1,000.

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Hit if you save, hit if you don't

While the Government wrestles with the task of persuading the low paid to save for their old age, the middle classes have already taken the message to heart. Many have stayed in work longer than they would have liked in order to build up as large a pension fund as possible.

From this pot of money they are obliged to buy an annuity that will provide an income for life. Yet annuity rates have fallen so fast that they might have been better off retiring earlier and taking a higher rate on a smaller pot of money. There are alternatives — delaying buying an annuity, and opting for income drawdown which involves taking an income from the fund and buying an annuity later. But this involves complex assumptions about future econom-



COMMENT
MARIANNE CURPHEY
Personal Finance
Deputy Editor

ic trends. In addition, the commission charged on some of the income drawdown contracts is so high that the Personal Investment Authority, the consumer watchdog, has begun an investigation. Meanwhile, as we report on page 59, careful savers who make additional voluntary contributions to their pensions via free-standing contracts with insurance companies may be losing chunks of their retirement money because they are paying hefty fees.

The Government is currently considering submissions from the financial services industry on the future of pensions and welfare provision. Among the suggestions is a simple index-tracking investment which is Kite-marked for quality, low cost, and sold without advice. The scandal of the 1980s, when salesmen persuaded people in generous employers' pension schemes to contract out into inferior personal pensions, means that advice is

now an unfashionable concept.

Certainly, if you have chosen to buy an index-tracking pension, the only consideration is cost. Until that is, you come to retire. Will the low-cost providers be obliged to offer advice on when to switch out of an equity-based fund and into something less volatile as you contemplate retirement? Who will advise of the need to shop around for the best annuity rate? Who will you turn to when deciding whether to delay buying an annuity until rates improve?

Advice from traditional insurance companies has not always been in the customers' best interest. But to throw out the concept of advice altogether because it has been abused in the past by salesmen will cost pensioners dear in the long-run.



BARRY BACHELOR

Drivers stuck on flooded roads will be covered for damage to their cars if they have comprehensive insurance

Insurers help to mop up

Insurers' emergency helplines were buzzing yesterday after two days of torrential rain left villages and roads in the Midlands under feet of water.

By yesterday afternoon insurance companies were reporting thousands of claims from anxious householders and car owners: an unprecedented level of demand for a Bank Holiday weekend.

Flood cover has been a standard part of building and contents insurance since 1953 when 280 people lost their lives in the Great Flood along the East Coast of England. Unfortunately, today many people feel compelled to economise and insure their home only as part of their agreement with their mortgage lender. Many will rue this decision as they survey their damaged furniture this weekend, while those motorists who were

stranded when roads flooded will be covered for damage only if they had taken out comprehensive insurance.

With more rain on the way, the advice of insurers for households not yet affected is to take pre-emptive action: use sandbags if you have them and move furniture upstairs if you can.

If you are already flooded, turn off the electricity at the mains. Then contact your insurer. The helpline number will be on the policy documents. Vic Rance, of the Association of British Insurers, said: "Let your insurer or broker know as quickly as possible. They can log your claim and offer you advice until the loss adjuster, who will assess the damage, arrives. Don't throw anything away. The loss adjuster will want to see how valuable it is and, besides, it might be possible to

repair the damage, particularly for carpets. Do not rush drying things either. Use a low heat to avoid further damage. Serious water damage can take a long time to repair. You might not be able to redecorate for up to six months, for instance."

The past three years have seen a marked improvement in the service offered by insurers. It is rare nowadays for policyholders to have to arrange and pay for the lengthy clean-up operation. Hambros Legal Services, which handles claims for many building and contents insurers including Norwich Union and Barclays, has told its loss adjusters to contact all policyholders in the flood areas.

GAVIN LUMSDEN

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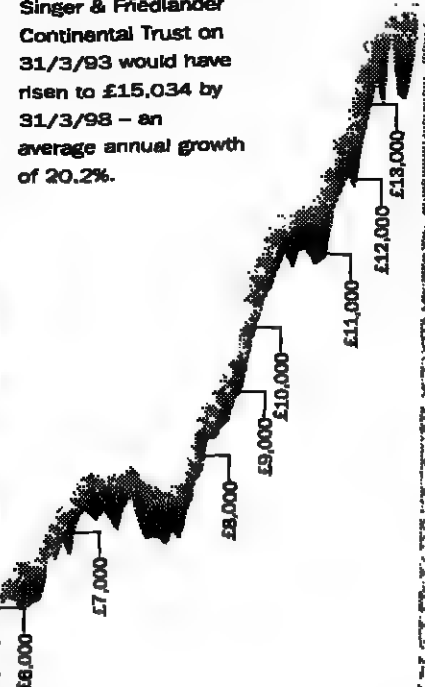
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Spring into action this Easter

New tax forms are in the post, Sara Williams offers advice

Easter — a festival of Christian renewal, but also the beginning of a new tax year. Tax returns have started landing on the doormats of 8.4 million taxpayers and big tax changes are under way for families, savers and investors.

Although the returns do not have to be sent back for several months, the long holiday weekend is an ideal time to start sorting out your papers.

If you want the Inland Revenue to calculate your bill, you need to get the return back by September 30. But it is still best to start early because, as millions of people found last year, you may need extra forms and help to complete the task.

Start by checking that you have received the correct form. Look at page two of the return and run through the first nine questions to see whether you need additional sections. The Inland Revenue's telephone order line, 0645-000 404, is open between 8am and 10pm every day.

Even if you intend to work out your own tax bill, you have until January 31 but you should still check to see if you have the right form. It is all too tempting to leave it until the last moment, and then you may find that time runs out. Some 670,000 taxpay-

ers found out in January that late filing means an automatic £100 fine.

BE PREPARED: Make sure you collect together the various documents you will need. Your employer will shortly be giving you a P60, showing your total pay for last year, plus a copy of the P11D or P11D form giving details of any fringe benefits or expenses.

Keep any interest statements sent by banks or building societies, dividend vouchers and tax deduction certificates.

People running their own businesses, or letting out property, need to collect receipts, payments and any other details of income and expenses.

CHECK YOUR SAVINGS: Are you saving the maximum in a tax-exempt special savings account (Tessa) which allows you to have up to £9,000 of savings and pay no tax on the interest? Tessa's will be phased out next April 6, when the new individual savings account (Isa) is introduced. But any existing Tessa's

can continue to the end of their five-year term and this will not affect the amount you can put into Isas.

So if you have not got a Tessa, think about starting one before April 6, but remember you need to be able to leave the capital in to the end of the five-year term, so it is not an option if you think you might need the money sooner.

LAST CHANCE FOR A PEP: Personal equity plans (Peps) will also disappear next April 6, since you will be able to invest in shares and unit trusts tax-free through Isas. Any holdings in Peps will continue to be free of income tax and capital gains tax and will not reduce the amount you can put into Isas. So, if you want to invest more in shares and unit trusts, maximise the size of your tax-free portfolio by taking out one last Pep during this tax year.

REVIEW YOUR PORTFOLIO: The Chancellor did away with bed and breakfasting in this year's Budget — stopping you selling shares

one day and buying them back the next to make a capital gain which can use up the annual tax-free allowance for capital gains tax. But the tax-free allowance still remains — at £6,800 this year — and it makes sense to realise gains that can use it up.

So at some stage in the coming year, think about any shares or unit trusts which have had a good run and you are willing to sell. If you think the prices have further to go, you could buy the shares back 30 days later without falling foul of the new rules — the risk is that you miss a gain in their value of more than the tax you save. For this year, at least, you can buy the shares back the next day provided it is into a Pep (this is known as "bed and pepping").

A husband and wife each have their own tax-free allowance to use up. And provided the transactions are not linked, one partner could always buy some shares in the company sold by the other.

SMALL BUSINESSES: People with small and medium-sized busi-

nesses can get bigger-than-normal capital allowances on spending on plant and machinery for another year. From July 2 until July 1 next year, the first-year allowance is 40 per cent (apart from expenditure on cars). And for now, you can get the even higher rate of 50 per cent introduced in last year's Budget for spending in the year from July 2, 1997.

Big changes to capital gains tax mean retirement relief is being phased out — most businesses will save more from the new taper relief which reduces the taxable gain the longer you own an asset. But some smaller business owners will do better if they can cash in on retirement relief before it disappears — check with your tax adviser.

Sara Williams is the author of The Lloyds Bank Tax Guide, published by Profile. The 1998-99 edition is now on sale, price £7.99, but Weekend Money readers can obtain it for the special price of £4.99 plus £1 p.p. Send a cheque for £5.99 payable to "Profile Books Ltd" with a return address to Times Office, Profile Books Ltd, 62 Queen Anne Street, London W1M 9LA.



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Marianne Curphey and Gavin Lumsden on the CGT changes in the Finance Bill

You can put all your shares in one basket

The Inland Revenue hotly denied this week that it had performed a U-turn over a key part of the Budget changes to capital gains tax.

Last month's Budget replaced the complex system of indexation, which reduced investors' CGT liability in accordance with inflation, with an equally complex taper system which cuts the tax bill the longer investors hold assets before selling them.

In the process, financial advisers claimed the Inland Revenue had altered the way investors could exploit losses from previous years to reduce their liability in the current tax year, which would mean they would have to pay more tax. With the publication this week of the Finance Bill, the Inland Revenue clarified the situation.

Capital gains tax can arise when you sell assets or shares worth more than your annual exemption, which this financial year will be £6,800.

In the past an investor who had made losses of £25,000 in previous years but had made a net gain of £10,000 in the current financial year was able to use his annual allowance (£6,800 last year) to reduce his chargeable gain to £3,200. He could then eliminate this gain entirely by using £3,200 of his losses. This left the investor with no tax to pay and £21,800 of losses to carry forward in future years.

However, financial advisers reckoned the wording of the Revenue's original Budget press release meant that the investor would have to carry forward £10,000 of losses to neutralise all his gains. This left his annual exemption untouched and wasted and meant he could carry forward only £15,000 of losses to exploit in future.

This week the Inland Revenue was adamant that no such change had occurred when it published the Finance Bill on Wednesday.

However, Maurice Parry-Wingfield, tax consultant with Deloitte & Touche, said the details in the Bill demonstrated that the Treasury had performed "a volte-face". He said: "This change of heart is extremely welcome. Investors with brought forward losses will not have to pay more tax on their gains after all. If they had kept to the original plans it would have been extremely



Happy Easter: it's good news on capital gains tax for shareholders

difficult for investors with smaller gains, perhaps on demutualisation shares, to work out their tax affairs under the new self-assessment rules. Presumably the Treasury was persuaded that to implement the original plan would have made self-assessment even more difficult to cope with."

Under the Budget changes, gains on shares bought after April 5 1998 will not be reduced by the old system of indexation, but the new tapering relief will apply instead.

A spokeswoman for the Inland Revenue said: "We have not made a U-turn. If you have a gain of £10,000 and a loss of £1,000, we would apply indexation if appropriate on the gain of

£9,000. Then we would apply losses from the same tax year followed by losses carried forward from earlier years to bring the gain down to the annual CGT exemption of £6,800. We would then apply the annual allowance, which would mean you had no tax to pay. Any losses remaining could then be carried forward."

Investors were also cheered by an important clarification on the "pooling" of shares. In the past investors who acquired shares in a company through a series of purchases over a number of years were able to treat the pool of shares as a single asset. If they sold some of the shares they did not have to work out which of the shares

they were selling. Instead, any potential gain on the sale was calculated against the average purchase price of all the shares.

The new taper — which effectively reduces CGT from 40 per cent to 24 per cent for higher-rate taxpayers between three and 10 years — is incompatible with pooling. Instead the Revenue has introduced a last-in-first-out system (LIFO) which means that you will always be selling your most recent acquisitions first.

For example, if a higher-rate taxpayer bought 1,000 shares in a company every year for a decade and then sold 2,000 shares he would not see a reduction in CGT as he would have to sell the shares he bought in the last two years, gains from which would still be taxed at the high rate of 40 per cent. However if he sold 3,000 shares, the third lot of 1,000 shares would begin to benefit from the taper. This had led some accountants to speculate that the LIFO rule meant that a new purchase of shares reset the tax clock on the entire pool, as reported last week in these pages. The clarification demonstrates that is not in fact the case.

However, the changes to the way assets are assessed for CGT places a great onus on individual shareholders to keep detailed records of their transactions.

Mr Parry-Wingfield said, however, that investors should be pleased that the Treasury had "done nothing to stop bed & pepping", ie, selling shares and then buying them back within a personal equity plan to make the most of the CGT allowance.

Nor has the Chancellor made any move to stop "double bed and breakfasting" between spouses, where one half of the couple sells a shareholding via a stockbroker and the other half of the couple buys it back to make the most of the CGT exemptions.

Mr Parry-Wingfield said: "Bed and breakfasting is a soft form of tax avoidance; it is difficult to believe that it was necessary to stop it. The fact that the Finance Bill has not attempted to prevent either bed and pepping or double bed and breakfasting underlines this."

top rate of 5.05 per cent is paid only to those saving over £50,000. The Reward Reserve offers higher returns as long as no withdrawals are made. Savers with deposits over £2,000 but under £10,000 earn 6.1 per cent and those with savings over £10,000 earn 6.35 per cent. However, the rates include a 2 per cent no withdrawals bonus. Rates go down to 4.1 per cent and 4.35 per cent if the money is taken out.

The only advantage to putting up with such poor returns is having real instant access to your savings. Those with deposits in the First Reserve have a cash and debit card while savers with the other two options can withdraw money from any branch or benefit from an instant transfer.

None of this will be possible with the Save Direct account. As with many telephone operations, savers must request a withdrawal by post or have the money transferred to a current account. This generally means a delay of three or four working days before the money is available.

As the new NatWest direct service is designed as a completely separate entity, the delays will affect existing NatWest customers in the same way.

SUSAN EMMETT

NatWest is poised to break ranks with the high street banks and launch a new high-interest telephone savings account in opposition to newcomers like Scottish Widows Bank, Standard Life and Direct Line.

NatWest is piloting the service among its staff and has recently sent out a mailshot to a selected number of creditworthy customers earning more than £20,000.

The service, which is based in Surrey, will stand separately from its branch operations, and is offering to pay savers rates of up to 7.25 per cent — which is far higher than those currently offered by NatWest's other savings options.

If the pilot is successful, NatWest could be launching the full operation later this year.

The move is the latest attempt by banks to reclaim the lucrative area of deposit-taking from insurance companies and supermarkets which have been making aggressive inroads into their territory.

Halifax began the trend for offering a telephone-only deposit account when it launched Halifax Direct in January. The operation offers considerably better rates than the former building society's branch-based Li-

NatWest to test high interest phone accounts

uid Gold account. Although savers are restricted to two withdrawals in a year, those with deposits in the direct account earn 7.85 per cent on balances of £40,000 or more and 7.3 per cent for the minimum deposit of £10,000. The Liquid Gold pays up to 4.65 per cent on sums over £25,000.

Britain's banks and building societies are coming under increasing pressure to offer higher interest rates to savers after the influx of new banks. Over the last year, Sainsbury, Tesco, Safeway, Virgin and Standard Life banks have all jumped on the savings bandwagon offering direct services. And, because branch-less banking is cheaper to operate, rates can be higher.

If the launch goes ahead, NatWest's new service could be in direct competition with the supermarkets which offer

high rates to small savers. Sainsbury and Tesco pay a flat 6.5 per cent on a minimum deposit of £1. The NatWest direct account would offer the same initial rate with the same minimum requirement. But rates are tiered and go up to 7.25 per cent for sums over £250,000.

Edward Creasey, an independent financial adviser with Clark Conway in Wimbledon, said: "It is a good step for a bank. If you look at the normal high street savings accounts, they are very uncompetitive. Nor are they very customer-friendly. This is a step in the right direction. People still like to stay with their high street banks."

Lloyds offers savers the paltry rate of 3.4 per cent a year for deposits between £500 and £5,000 in its instant access account and only 0.5

per cent for anything under £500. Barclays instant access offers little better with 0.75 per cent for sums over £100 but under £4,999. The top rate of 4.7 per cent is only paid on accounts over £25,000. Midland offers 4.25 per cent up to £5,000 and 6 per cent for deposits over £50,000.

Although NatWest said the new product was not designed to replace any of its other savings options available, the bank's existing savings vehicles offer rates which are just as miserly as its counterparts.

With NatWest First Reserve, savers put up with 2.25 per cent interest for sums under £100 and 3.85 per cent for deposits over £1,000. The Premium Reserve, which requires a minimum deposit of £2,000, offers better value with a rate of 4.35 per cent on balances under £10,000. The

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Clare Stewart asks the experts if we are facing a cool spring

Are markets heading for April showers?

The FTSE 100 has enjoyed a record-breaking run in the first three months of this year, prompting City analysts to recalculate their forecasts for 1998. The index of leading shares closed up 50.3 points at 6,105.5 on Thursday night, the last day of trading before the Easter break, just short of the all-time high of 6,134, which was set on Tuesday. The rise was fuelled in part by the rush of private investors putting money into Peps before the end of the tax year, and stock shortages causing institutional investors to pay higher prices.

The length of the market's bull run has inevitably raised the question of how much longer prices will continue to rise, and the severity of a correction if and when it comes. "We could see a cooling-off and a period of consolidation given that the market has travelled so far," says David McBain, UK equity strategist at NatWest Markets. Company valuations are high and, says Mr McBain, are beginning to look "strained" against the expectations of weaker earnings growth, and factors that have yet to have an impact fully on company balance sheets such as the strength of sterling.

Telecommunications groups were the best-performing sector in the first quarter and rose by almost 40 per cent. Groups such as BT, Cable & Wireless and Orange have seen their share prices climb steadily ahead, indicating investors' belief in the long-term growth prospects offered by the sector. Particularly attractive are the prospects offered by the ever-expanding mobile phone market, both in the UK and in Europe. The exposure of groups such as BT to another burgeoning area — Internet services — has also drawn investors, while the cable groups now look more interesting as the benefits of their investment in networks begin to pay off.

Bank shares did phenomenally well last year with

some stocks having doubled over the past year. Since the beginning of 1998 there has been some profit-taking in the sector. However, bid speculation, the prospect of the banks returning on billions of pounds of excess capital to shareholders and the expectation that the high street banks will continue to make considerable cost savings are likely to ensure that these stocks remain at a premium.

Of the more recent entrants, Energis, where National Grid has a majority stake, has seen a sharp price rise since news of its joint venture with two of Europe's largest telecom groups, Deutsche Telekom and France Telecom.

The wide-ranging group of companies classified under support services have also outperformed the market since January. The sector spans computer groups to dry cleaners and includes large groups such as Rentokil Initial and Hays. It rose in value by 37.26 per cent in the first quarter.

General insurers have also enjoyed a good run helped by a number of good results from groups reporting in early 1998, with valuations moving up to the higher levels traditionally enjoyed by life assurance groups. There has also been a focus on consolidation in the industry, both in Europe and in the UK, where the highlight was the merger between Commercial Union and General Accident. Overall the sector valuation rose by 29.35 per cent, and although analysts gave warning that profits will start to come under pressure, once again bid speculation is likely to propel the sector forward.

A good results season has also helped the construction sector, where valuations rose overall by 25.6 per cent. The falling price of crude oil hit the exploration and production companies, making it the only sector to drop in value during the first quarter, falling by nearly 9 per cent. Meanwhile,



Healthcare, a sector dependent on a flow of encouraging news about new drugs under development to push shares ahead, managed a poor increase of 2.56 per cent over the first quarter.

The telephone number for the Chase de Vere Pep Guide quoted on page 37 of last week's Weekend Money was incorrect. The number to ring is 0800 526 092.

Reasons to think smaller

While the FTSE 100 continues to break records, investors who feel uneasy with the very high prices are being urged to look at the smaller company stocks.

Great things have been predicted for the hitherto neglected smaller companies which trade on the UK stock market. Until the past few months they have shown little growth. Now those City forecasters who peddle the line that the smaller companies are due to take off this year point to profits and dividends in small companies rising more than in larger groups.

Not everyone is so bullish. Frank Manduca, a fund manager for Gartmore's UK Smaller Companies fund, said: "Smaller companies had an horrendous year in 1997 relative to larger groups, but March and April in 1998 have been better so perhaps sentiment has improved." He says

that while there is value to be found among smaller groups, there is "a lot of dross" which tends to weigh the index down.

"However, we can provide investors with good returns by selective investment," he suggests support services, property groups, leisure firms and ones involved in construction and building materials.

Andrew Brough, a fund manager of Schroders UK Smaller Companies, is more upbeat about small companies, helped by the signs of increasing bid interest from larger groups, and venture capitalists looking for investment opportunities. "Things are on the turn with recent corporate activity focusing people's attitudes on the value that is there," he said.

Meanwhile, the David Aaron Partnership, independent financial advisers in Milton Keynes, says smaller companies now present a buying

opportunity. David Aaron, the senior partner who has produced a report on the sector, said: "We feel that most investors should have at least 30 per cent of their equity portfolios invested in smaller companies at present, spread internationally."

Gartmore's smaller companies unit trust is given the highest rating by the report, showing a return over five years of 179 per cent. Other UK unit trusts include Britannia Smaller Companies, Hill Samuel UK emerging companies, Schroder UK smaller companies and Smith & Williamson smaller securities.

In Europe he rates Barings Europe select and Invesco European smaller companies unit trusts.

Among North American unit trusts, the smaller company ones run by managers Hill Samuel, Foreign & Colo-

nial and Henderson have been selected. Over five years a £1,000 investment in the Hill Samuel US smaller companies fund would have grown to £2,647, against a sector average of £1,972.

As with other sectors, investors in smaller companies should look for the performance over the medium to longer term. While overall, smaller groups will have to work hard to catch up with the leading shares, selective stocks look much more promising. Fund managers say that on a three to five-year basis, they offer prospects of good returns.

A Guide to the Top 10 Smaller Companies Unit Trusts is available from David Aaron Partnership, price £1. Write to: Shelton House, High Street, Woburn Sands, Milton Keynes MK17 8SD.

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Few expect Tokyo's economic news to improve just yet, says Caroline Merrell

Sickness of Japan is worry for UK investors

The growing economic crisis in Japan took a turn for the worse this week, as the president of Sony Corporation, one of the country's biggest companies, admitted what everyone has known for a long time, that Japan is on the point of a deep recession. Norio Ohga, Sony's president, said: "The Japanese economy is on the verge of collapsing if the economic situation continues to decline. This will no doubt have a damaging effect on the rest of the world."

Any British investors unfortunate to hold unit or investment trusts that have shares in Japanese companies will have seen an almost continuous downward spiral in the value of their holdings for nearly a decade.

Even those that invested three years ago in an average Japanese unit trust would have seen the value of their investments nearly halve. According to Association of Unit Trusts and Investment Funds (AUTIF) figures, £1,000 put into an average unit trust at the beginning of 1995 would now be worth a little over £550. In contrast, £1,000 invested in a UK index-tracking fund would have doubled in value.

The past few months have been especially painful for those with holdings in Japan, as share prices have been severely affected by the recession besetting the rest of Asia. Some of Japan's biggest export markets are in Korea, Malaysia and Thailand. All these countries have been hit by huge currency devaluations that have left domestic consumers unable to afford Japanese goods. The comparative strength of the yen has made goods even more expensive for the cash-strapped consumers.

In the fortnight to April 3, Japan's Nikkei 225 share index fell by 8 per cent. Its biggest fall came in the six months to January this year, when the market dropped 27 per cent. After a turbulent week, the Nikkei 225 closed on Friday at 16,481.

Those nursing losses on their Japanese investments will find it hard to remember that Japan was once one of the world financial superpowers — second

only to the US in the size of its stock market. Although Japan is still the world's second-largest economy, the country's humiliation was completed this week when the International Monetary Fund, the world economic rescue service, gave warning about weakness in the country. Those holding on to their investments must now be wondering whether to cut their losses and put their hard-earned money somewhere else, or to wait for recovery.

Figures from AUTIF revealed that £157 million was switched from Japanese funds in the first month of this year. This was more than twice the amount of money that was switched from these funds last year. People who do not hold any investments in the country have been looking for the bottom of the market, waiting for a signal that the worst is now over.

The opinion of UK fund managers can be broadly divided into two categories — those who are bearish over the short term and the long term and those who are bearish over the short term.

The Japanese Government, led by the Ryutaro Hashimoto, the beleaguered Prime Minister, has tried in vain to stimulate the economy by spending billions of yen on public work programmes. Other economic conditions that prevail in Japan would normally be enough to spark some sort of recovery — interest rates and inflation rates are practically zero, and savings rates are very high.



Sea of red: share prices in Tokyo have continued to fall despite government measures

Mark Fawcett of Gartmore says: "The Japanese do not want to spend their money. Many would rather put it under the mattress." He said that Japanese workers had seen the value of their pensions fall, and were worried about job security — not conditions that will send them to the shops. Even the £18 billion of tax cuts announced by the Government this week is unlikely to be enough to stimulate demand.

Mr Fawcett and others believe that there is more pain to come in Japan. The economy, he believes, has still to go through massive restructuring. He said: "They are not addressing the fundamental problems on the supply side. They do not want to accept the pain of a true recession."

The Japanese stock market is particularly susceptible to financial shocks because a large part of it consists of banks and insurance companies. Another collapse of a bank or broker will have a big impact on the level of the market.

Mr Fawcett said that he did not foresee the economy recovering until next year. Those investors with holdings in Japan may prefer to move their money elsewhere until they feel that the bottom has been reached.

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With the Beatles the value of memorabilia is likely to hold up better than it is for items relating to one-hit wonders

Will it be fab for you?

Clare Stewart looks at how to start
a collection of pop memorabilia

Fortunes are made and lost in the world of pop and rock music and only a handful of artists ever make it on an international scale.

Forecasting who will be big is always risky, but spotting the new Jimi Hendrix can pay off for the private collector of pop and rock memorabilia.

It is a growing market, and demand from private buyers, dealers and themed restaurants is sending prices rocketing. But it is also an unpredictable market. A T-shirt signed by Noel Gallagher may be desirable today, but it is not necessarily a bankable asset to see you comfortably through retirement in 20 years' time.

Experts constantly say buy what you like and interests you, not what you think will be a good investment.

Recent examples of top-selling items from auction houses give an indication which names are good sellers.

In February at Bonhams, Beatles-related pieces fetched some of the highest prices. A set of 59 black and white negatives of John Lennon and Yoko Ono taken during the 1969 Bed-In for Peace in Montreal sold for £28,000. An unpublished lyric by Jimi Hendrix, scribbled on a few pieces of United Airlines newspaper, fetched £15,000.

Ted Owen, the entertainment specialist at Bonhams, says: "If the item belonged to one of the legends such as the Beatles, Rolling Stones, Pink Floyd or Marc Bolan, it is going to see a good price."

He says the Beatles still lead the field and prices are rising. "Prices for Elvis items may have levelled, as there have been a lot of sales and we have seen some amazing prices, but the Beatles will go on — they have always been popular. The Japanese are particularly enthusiastic, and at a Beatles-only sale by Bonhams in

Tokyo last year, a collector paid £48,000 for Sir Paul McCartney's birth certificate.

Carey Wallace, the pop specialist at Christie's, says that items that will have a lasting value will have belonged to artists who have influenced the music world. Thus tartan scarves from the Bay City Rollers are unlikely to generate much interest, while items from the Sex Pistols are more likely to sell well.

At Christie's on April 20, there will be more than 300 lots, with estimated prices from £100 to £20,000. Elvis treasures likely to attract attention include a page of handwritten lyrics from 1959, estimated to go for between £4,500 and £5,000, and a cream suit made for Elvis in the 1970s will probably fetch between £8,000 and £12,000.

Among the 100 lots of Beatles items will be the only known example of the signatures of the five original band members, including Stuart Sutcliffe and Pete Best.

For Oasis fans, there is a rare cassette recording of songs written and performed by Noel Gallagher before the formation of Oasis, which is expected to make between £4,000 and £6,000.

Amazingly, a life-size cardboard cut-out of the Spice Girls made for a Pepsi promotion is estimated to fetch between £500 and £1,100.

Putting a value on contemporary items is hard, says Miss Wallace. "You have to speculate on what interest there may be, when there is no precedent."

Collectors have to be prepared to see prices relating to a

favourite artist or band fluctuate. Ted Owen, from Bonhams, says: "A few years ago items connected to Bros were fanatically collectible. Then, they were fanatically forgotten."

Other stars who have seen their saleroom popularity wane are Madonna and Michael Jackson. One reason for this is the sheer amount of signed material that has come onto the market. Christie's sold one of Jackson's trademark jewelled gloves in 1990 for £15,000 but, says Carey Wallace, it would not reach that figure today.

Bonhams has a sale of rock posters on May 5 at which prices are expected to start at £100. There are also numerous specialist fairs and events around the country. Made in Heaven is one organiser that runs memorabilia events, which include stands for people who have just cleared their attics.

The next memorabilia show is at the Scottish Exhibition Centre in Glasgow on August 29 and 30. Another will be at the NEC in Birmingham on November 7 and 8.

Henry Cook, the organiser, says contemporary items are

selling well. Recent copies of magazines with a particular star on the cover, which may have been £2.50 in the shops a few months ago, can now fetch £40 to £50.

Magazines such as *Record Collector* are useful for contacts with other enthusiasts, and notices of forthcoming events. Specialist fan club magazines are also a good source of information.

Experts advise serious collectors to look for material that is handwritten, or has some personal element, such as contracts, cheques or clothing. They will be much rarer than signed photographs for example, which are often produced in huge quantities.

But always check authenticity, as there are a lot of forgeries around, says Mr Owen of Bonhams. It is usually difficult to get your money back if you buy from a small dealer or private collector. Ask for a description of the item from the dealer.

This is important if you subsequently find it to be other than what was sold to you. Purchases from auction houses are checked for authenticity and a buyer can seek a refund if the purchase is found to be a fake.

Made in Heaven: 01899-221 622; Bonhams: 0171-393 3900; Christie's: 0171-581 7611

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Free guide to help win the tax battle

Price Waterhouse marks the start of the new tax year with *Tax Planning Focus*, a guide to efficient tax and financial planning. The guide examines a range of issues raised by the Chancellor's Budget last month and looks forward to possible future changes.

Questions considered include: who are the winners and losers in capital gains tax changes? how will the profit-related pay be replaced? is the company car still an attractive benefit? and how much should a self-assessment penalty notice worry you? Free from Price Waterhouse publications department (0171-939 3000).

A plan-of-action guide for those who have been made redundant or asked to take early retirement has been produced by Towry Law, the independent financial adviser. *Changing Employment and Personal Finance* has been designed to deal with all financial aspects of redundancy and begins with an action plan including whom to tell and how to handle the loss of earnings. It explains the state benefits available and how to deal with the longer-term problem of mortgage repayments.

A rapid response pledge, plus a discount for a callout-free year, has been announced by the Environmental Transport Association (ETA). The ETA has an average response time of 35 minutes and the motoring organisation is confident that it will be able to offer breakdown assistance in less than an hour. If not, ETA promises to pay £10 to a member left waiting. Discounts of up to 20 per cent may be reclaimed if a member does not make any callouts during the year. To join ETA or for further details, telephone 01932-828 582.

A free guide to investing in traded endowment plans (Teps) has been issued by Rickman Toose, the independent financial adviser. A Teps is a with-profits endowment policy which the original policyholder sells in mid-term. The guide says Teps are a relatively low-risk investment and can, if required, be viewed as fairly short-term. They may also be bought quite cheaply. For a copy, telephone 0800-783 9568.

LIZANNE ROSE

GUARANTEED INCOME BONDS

ANNUAL INCOME
Rates as at April 9, 1998

Investment (£)	Company	Standard Rate (%)
1 Year		
1,000	Hambro Assured	4.70
5,000	AIG Life	6.22
10,000	GE Fin Assur	6.50
2 Years		
1,000	Hambro Assured	5.35
3,000	ITT Lon & Edin	5.95
5,000	AIG Life	6.00
10,000	GE Fin Assur	6.32
3 Years		
1,000	Hambro Assured	5.45
3,000	ITT London & Ed	6.05
20,000	Hambro Assured	6.10
50,000	Hambro Assured	6.15
4 Years		
1,000	Hambro Assured	5.30
3,000	ITT London & Ed	5.90
5 Years		
1,000	Hambro Assured	5.15
3,000	ITT London & Ed	5.60

Source: Chamberlain & Bosc 0171-483 7800. Net rates, income and capital guaranteed. Early surrender. Terms vary. Monthly income may be available.

SAVERS' BEST BUYS

Account	Notice of term	Deposit	Rate	Interest paid
Standard Life Bank 0945 555657	Instant Access	Instant	£1	6.96
Scottish Widows Bank 0845 8450829	Instant Access	Instant	£100	7.00
Safeway 0800 959595	Instant Access	Instant	£1,000	7.30
Northern Rock 0845 600 6767	Instant Access	Instant	£5,000	7.80

Account	Notice of term	Deposit	Rate	Interest paid
Scarborough BS 01723 500618	Direct 30	30 day	£1,000	7.80
Stroud & Swindon BS 0345 252423	Direct 30	30 day	£10,000	8.00
Legal & General Bank 0500 111200	60 Direct 4	60 day	£1,000	8.00
Investec Bank (UK) 0171 203 1850	Base Plus	1 year	£2,001	8.00

Account	Notice of term	Deposit	Rate	Interest paid
Norwich & Peterborough 01793 372222	5 year	£100	8.00	Yly
Bradford & Bingley BS 0800 582588	5 year	£500	8.00	Yly
Darlington BS 01325 386386	5 year	£1,000	8.00	Yly
Britannia BS 0800 132304	5 year	£3,000	8.00	Yly

CREDIT CARDS BEST BUYS

Card type	Interest per month	APR	Fee per annum
Capital One Bank 0800 689000	0.57%N	6.90%N	Nil
RBS Advantage 0800 077770	0.64%N	7.90%N	Nil
Co-operative Bank 0800 108000	0.69%N	8.90%N	Nil

PERSONAL LOANS BEST BUYS

APR	Monthly payment on £5,000 for 3yrs with insurance	Monthly payment on £5,000 for 3yrs with no insurance
9.90%N	£163.13	£166.11
12.50%N	£190.33	£193.33
12.60%N	£193.75	£196.38

NB: A = Minimum age 25 years; B = Operated by post or telephone; C = No interest free period; F = Fixed Rate; H = If insurance not arranged APR 12.7 per cent; N = Introductory rate for a limited period; P = Operated by Post; T = Operated by Telephone.

* RATES SHOWN ARE GROSS AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE. PLEASE CHECK RATES BEFORE INVESTING.

Source: Moneyfacts, the Monthly Guide to Investment & Mortgage Rates (01682 500 677)

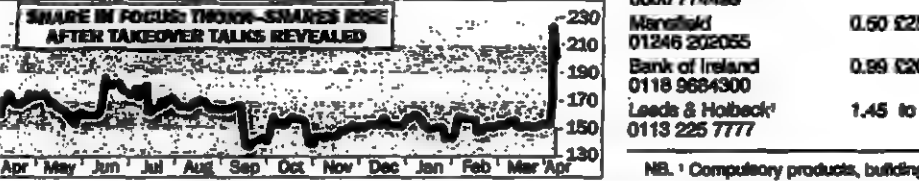
PIBS

Fixed Rate	Gross coupon	Buying price	% Gross yield	Issue price	Minimum purchase amount
Birmingham Midshires	9.375%	132.25	7.09	100.17	1,000
Bradford & Bingley	11.625%	160.50	7.24	100.13	10,000
Bradford & Bingley	13.000%	176.75	7.36	100.20	10,000
Britannia	18.000%	182.75	7.11	100.42	1,000
Coventry	12.125%	172.00	7.05	100.75	1,000
First National	11.750%	168.00	7.21	100.25	10,000
Leeds & Holbeck	13.575%	193.75	6.97	100.22	1,000
Newcastle	10.750%	157.00	8.05	100.20	1,000
Newcastle	12.625%	183.00	6.90	100.45	1,000
Skipton	12.875%	190.25	6.77	100.48	1,000

PERPETUAL SUBORDINATED BONDS

Issuer	Gross coupon	Buying price	% Gross yield	Issue price	Minimum purchase amount
Cheff & Gloucester	11.750%	166.25	7.07	100.98	50,000
Halifax	8.750%	119.75	7.31	100.62	50,000
Halifax	12.000%	156.50	7.67	100.28	50,000
Halifax	13.500%	192.75	7.07	100.00	50,000
Bristol & West	13.380%	194.00	7.27	100.24	1,000
Northern Rock	12.625%	174.75	7.22	100.14	1,000

PBS=Permanent Interest-bearing shares. Source: Greenwich NatWest



Source: Greenwich NatWest

UNIT-LINKED INVESTMENT SERVICES

Source: Greenwich NatWest

NATIONAL SAVINGS

	Gross rate	Net rate after 20%	Maximum investment £	Notes	Contact	
Ordinary A/c Investment A/c	2.00	1.60	10-10,000**		0845 845000	
Income Bond	4.75	3.80	1-4899**		0845 845000	
First Opt Bond	7.00	5.60	4,200-25,000**	1mth	0845 845000	
48th Issue Cert	8.50	5.20	1,000-2500**		0845 845000	
Children's Bond	4.80		100-10,000	8day	0845 845000	
Govt Est Rate	6.00		25-1,000	8day	0845 845000	
Capital Bonds	3.50		100-250,000		0845 845000	
13th Ind Linked	6.00	4.80	100-250,000	8day	0845 845000	
Pension Bonds	2.25		100-10,000	8day	0845 845000	
	6.10	4.88	3.66	500-50,000	8day	0845 845000

** For FTSE 100 Index. ** For FTSE 100 Index. ** For FTSE 100 Index. ** For FTSE 100 Index.

PENSION ANNUITIES

All figures are the gross annual annuity (£100,000 purchase), guaranteed 5 years, paid monthly in advance

SINGLE LIFE (level ann)

Level	Age 60	Age 65	Age 70
Sun Life	£8,840	£9,772	£11,288
Canada Life	£8,815	£9,752	£11,268
Commercial Union	£8,822	£9,759	£11,272
Standard Life	£8,816	£9,760	£11,048
Legal & General	£8,820	£9,763	£10,879

SINGLE LIFE (level ann)

Level	Age 60	Age 65	Age 70
Norwich Union	£7,791	£8,649	£9,863
Sun Life	£7,810	£8,671	£9,881
Canada Life	£7,790	£8,650	£9,843
Equitable Life	£7,810	£8,671	£9,881
General	£7,553	£8,497	£9,790

JOINT LIFE, 2/3 WIDOWS (level annuity)

Level	Age 60	Age 65	Age 70
Sun Life	£7,405	£8,265	£9,482
Equitable Life	£7,435	£8,291	£9,542
Norwich Union	£7,380	£8,232	£9,453
Prudential	£7,382	£8,235	£9,454
General	£7,163	£8,017	£9,175

Source: Annuity Direct (0171 684 5000)

Statistics compiled by Lizanne Rose

FIRST-TIME BUYERS

Source: Annuity Direct (0171 684 5000)

Source: Annuity Direct (0171 684 5000)

Source: Annuity Direct (0171 684 5000)

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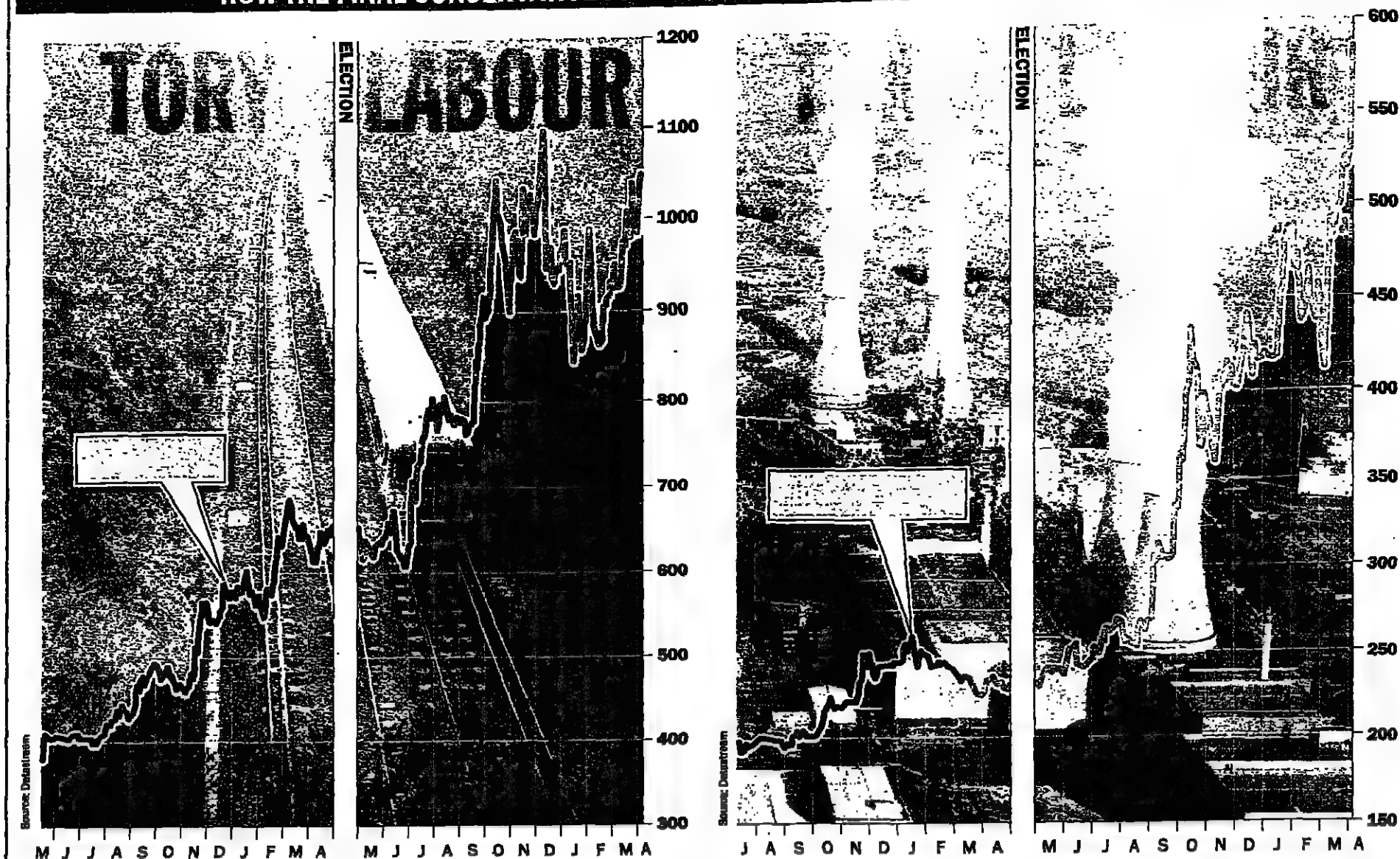
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HOW THE FINAL CONSERVATIVE PRIVATISATION HAS FARED UNDER NEW LABOUR



Sell-off risks justified by rewards

More than a million small investors who bought into the final two privatisations of the Conservative Government are sitting on gains of nearly 200 per cent as fears of a Labour purge on privatised stocks have evaporated.

The phenomenal rise in Railtrack and British Energy's share prices has caused concern that the assets were sold off too cheaply. A National Audit Office report due out next month is expected to criticise the sell-off price of British Energy, saying that more money could have been raised for taxpayers if the Government had retained a stake in the business.

Shares in the companies privatised by the Conserva-

Patrick Collinson reckons the controversy over the last two privatisations has helped investors

tives have soared since Labour's landslide victory in the election on May 1, helped by the continued buoyancy of the stock market and a softer than expected stance on regulation and windfall taxes by the new Government.

The last two privatisations, under the previous John Major government, Railtrack and British Energy, were among the most controversial of all the sell-offs since privatisations began.

The flotation prospectus for Railtrack, published in May

1996, spelt out a warning from Clare Short, who was then Labour's transport spokesman. She said that a future Labour Government would "reconstitute British Rail as a fully publicly owned, publicly accountable company". Potential investors in the flotation of British Energy in July 1996 were warned also that a Labour Government would introduce tighter regulation which could affect future profits.

The warnings failed to deter the 650,000 investors who applied for Railtrack shares and 660,000 who applied for British Energy, making both issues oversubscribed. More than half have since sold their shares, but for those who have held on, the rewards have been spectacular.

Railtrack came to the stock market at 380p, and this week was trading around the £10.95 level, a gain of 188 per cent in only 23 months. The typical Railtrack small shareholder obtained a parcel of 510 shares, costing £1,938 at issue but worth £5,584 today before dealing costs.

Small shareholders in British Energy were invited to subscribe for part-paid shares

at 100p, with a second instalment of 90p a year later. Last week the shares were trading at around 585p, making the nuclear power generator the top-performing FTSE 100 stock over the past year. Shareholders in the retail offer typically received about 400 shares on flotation at a fully paid-up price of 198p, costing £792, but worth about £2,340 just 21 months later.

So why were the shares sold off on the cheap? Alan Durrant, head of UK equities at Hargreaves Lansdown, the share shop that was heavily involved in the flotation of both stocks, said the shares had to be priced low to overcome fears of potential action by a future Labour Government. He said: "The Labour Party's rhetoric at the time was largely responsible for the companies being sold off so cheaply. They had to be priced at a hefty discount to reflect the worry and political risk inherent in the shares."

Neither Railtrack nor British Energy offered much in the way of "staggering" gains for investors who bought into the offer and sold on the first day of dealing. Two weeks after the

British Energy flotation the 100p part-paid shares were trading at 97p, hit by news of two reactors that had to be closed down for investigation.

But Mr Durrant has been a fan of both since launch, for the same reasons that have driven most privatisation stocks upwards. He said: "The past experience of privatisations is that you can double or treble future profits. Once the knife is taken to the company, costs simply fall away. We saw that happening with Railtrack in particular. Here you had a company which could grow earnings by 25 per cent per year for three years."

"Understandably, there was some political risk, but in Railtrack you had a fundamentally fantastic business, which has almost had to understate just how well it is doing to avoid announcing almost embarrassingly good figures."

Before the election, some small shareholders piled into cash in fear of the impact that a Labour Government might have on the stock market, but they piled back in once their worst fears failed to materialise. Mark Howard, managing director of Maddison Monetary Management, the inde-

pendent financial adviser, said: "We saw people who wanted to go into cash before the election, but they went back into the market once they saw the City's reaction. Most of them were out of the market for only a short time."

Institutional investors' enthusiasm for privatisation stocks has dimmed only once since Tony Blair came to power. One month after taking up office John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, criticised Railtrack's first set of profit figures and threatened tougher regulation. The share price immediately plunged, but recovered rapidly.

Institutional investors — largely UK pension funds — have played a large part in driving up the price of Railtrack and British Energy shares, hoovering up shares as small investors have sold their holdings. Flemings, Threadneedle, Standard Life and Barclays have been big buyers of Railtrack, which is now 70 per cent owned by institutional investors compared with 40 per cent at launch.

Mercury Asset Management, Templeton and Schroders are now the biggest shareholders in British Energy, which is now 80 per cent held by institutions. The lesson for small investors is that holding on to privatisation stocks rather than selling for short-term gains has proved the most lucrative policy.

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SUNDAY TIMES, 1st June 1997

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Graham Searjeant
on the urge for
mega-mergers

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FLOOD ALERT 51

When April showers
soak more than
your garden



If you want to keep your head above water, you may find it better to retire before annuity rates fall further than to try to save for a bigger pension

Stay afloat in old age

People who have postponed retirement to build up as big a pension fund as possible may actually be worse off because annuity rates which govern their annual pension income — are falling at an alarming pace.

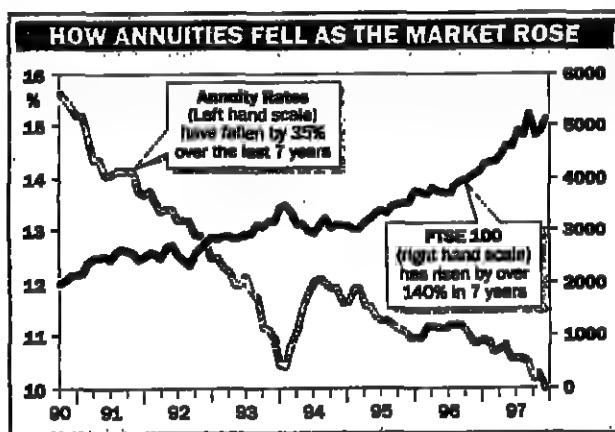
Instead of benefiting from financial prudence, people in their late 50s and early 60s who have continued in work for the past seven years may actually have impoverished themselves because annuity rates fell by 35 per cent over that period.

For many people in personal pension and money purchase employers' schemes the income they can expect each year for the rest of their life has dropped significantly and there is no sign of a short-term improvement.

Many people close to retirement have continued in work for as long as possible to increase the pension fund from which an insurance company will pay them an annual income for life. The level of income depends both on the value of the fund and the prevailing annuity rate. Rates have been dropping so fast, however, that delaying the purchase of an annuity by just one year could have knocked 10 per cent off your annual income, according to advisers.

Unfortunately, both financial advisers and economists are unable to predict much good news. Many people who were thinking of retiring decided to delay buying an annuity in the early 1990s in the hope that rates would start to pick up and they would have a bigger fund from which to draw an annual income. But the reverse has happened, according to William Bullock, chairman of Chantrey Financial Services, who says that rates have fallen so far that a pension fund would have had to grow by 10 per cent over the past 12 months just to provide

Marianne Curphey reports on a dilemma for annuity-buyers



the same annual income as an annuity purchased at the beginning of 1997.

So what has caused the horrific fall? Annuity rates are linked to long-term gilt yields and gilt yields tend to fall as the stock market rises. The long-term gilt yield at January 1997 was 7.7 per cent but has now dropped to 5.96 per cent. The bank base rate, meanwhile, has gone up from 6 per cent to 7.25 per cent and short-term interest rates have risen accordingly. The normal law of economics would mean that this in turn would mean that the long-term gilt yield would also rise but because of special circumstances this is not happening.

Some specialist annuity brokers are putting a brave face on a gloomy situation. Billy Burrows, of William Burrows Annuities, argues that falling annuity rates are not necessarily bad news for people saving for their retirement, because strong stock market growth swells the value of shares held in their pension plan.

He said: "You may be no

worse off despite falling annuity rates because the value of your pension is rising faster than annuity rates are dropping."

However, Mr Bullock is not convinced by this argument. While the FTSE 100 index rose 23 per cent over the last year, this massive growth was not necessarily enjoyed by managed pension funds.

He said: "On a fund of £10,000, at the average annuity rate last year you would have got an annual income of £1,100. Annuity rates have dropped so fast over the past year that you would now receive only £990 per year from the same £10,000 fund. Most people on the brink of retirement will not now be holding the sort of investments that produce such large returns because their advisers will have urged them to switch into something less volatile than equities."

"Most people, therefore, would have been advised to switch into with-profit funds or fixed-interest and cash funds. So while the stock

market has risen strongly over the past year, Standard Life's with-profit fund has grown annually by just 4 per cent."

The dilemma facing those who are currently contemplating retirement is whether to buy an annuity now, while rates are historically low, or wait for things to improve.

Financial advisers say if you can wait for five years you may see some rise in the annuity rates, but your fund may not have grown sufficiently in the interval.

Mr Bullock said: "There are two problems facing people who are trying to decide whether to buy now. The advent of the single currency means that one of the criteria the UK needs to meet to join up is the convergence of interest rates with the rest of Europe, and particularly Germany."

"Germany is 120 base points or 1.2 per cent below our ten-year long-term gilt yield of 5.9 per cent. If we are going to join the European currency then our UK long-term gilt yield is going to have to come down to about 4.5 per cent. So over the next five years if the UK is going to join EMU, annuity rates will continue to fall."

However, there are those who believe that the chances of the UK joining up are lessening by the day. If you believe them, Mr Bullock says, then you can be more bullish about annuity rates.

"If we do not join EMU, then we could see gilt yields jump to around 7 per cent. That is the dilemma: in three years' time you could be looking either at annuity rates of 4.5 per cent, or 7 per cent. Unfortunately there is no real

answer and investors have to weigh up the probabilities."

Mike Wadsworth, a specialist in insurance with the actuary Watson Wyatt, said it was difficult to say how quickly yields would fall but added: "One could expect the downward drift to continue. The long-term yields are currently below 6 per cent which is historically very low. A delay in buying an annuity could prove reasonably expensive."

Justin Modray, investment adviser with Chase de Vere, said investors could consider deferring an annuity until they reached 75 if they could afford to do so.

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Call for 'bench mark' checks

A report published this week by the Adam Smith Institute, the right-wing think tank, recommends scrapping the current system of regulation of financial products entirely (Caroline Merrell writes).

It suggests instead that the products themselves should be regulated through a system of benchmarking. This would involve introducing certain basic standards for the companies to adhere to. Those that did not comply with the benchmark would be unlikely to sell many products.

Benchmarking is certain to form a central part of future Government policy on all financial products, including stakeholder pensions.

According to the report: "The sale and regulation of financial packages must be radically reformed if truly cost-effective personal savings, pensions and insurance plans are to come within the grasp of all individuals and families."

The Government is committed to making more people save for their retirement. It also wants to cut back on the annual £90 billion welfare bill by encouraging people to make private provisions.

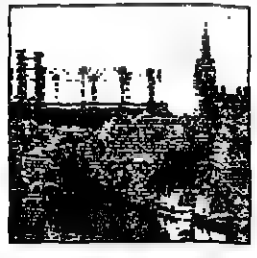
The report, *Simply Secure*, also recommends the Government's pensions and savings proposals should be merged and added to a new basic insurance account, which would pay out if misfortune struck.

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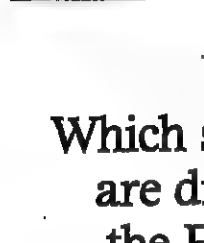


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WEEKEND MONEY
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David and Sarah-Jane Cook with Fiona, 6. They hope to save £100 a year on gas

Cooks warm to thoughts of cheaper gas supply

As the gas industry opens up for competition, consumer watchdogs have expressed concern about some of the new gas suppliers' sales tactics. But despite worries about some of the agents' behaviour, the canny householder can still make big savings on gas bills (Lizanne Rose writes).

The Cook family of Wheatstead, Suffolk, are switching because they have above-average gas consumption. They have a gas-fired Aga stove which burns about £2 worth of fuel per day.

Mr Cook signed a contract with Eastern Natural Gas three weeks ago and expects to save about £100 a year. He responded to a mailshot from Eastern Natural Gas which was followed up by a visit from the gas company to discuss the contract. He said: "Switching from British Gas was motivated purely by cost. There seems no reason not to change provider if you can receive the same product for less."

Gas supply controversy, page 49

FEATURE



We must be batty: Edinburgh's icicle cricketers

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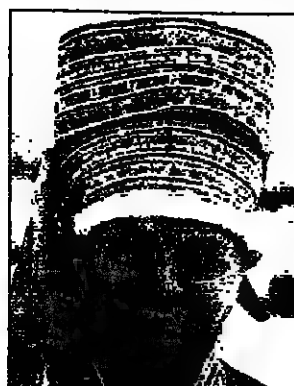
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THE TIMES WEEKEND

SATURDAY APRIL 11 1998

Miracle or just a false impression?

Scientists are sceptical but the Turin Shroud, which goes on show next week, still has a huge following. **Richard Owen** reports from Rome

begged the body of Jesus.
53 And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.
54 And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on.

The shroud is referred to in the Gospel according to St Luke

In a cavernous church in the centre of Rome 100 people are sitting on hard chairs, riveted by the image on a screen in front of the altar and hanging on every word from an elderly white-haired surgeon, Dr Sebastiano Rodante, from Sicily.

"Look at this dried blood, these lesions," says Dr Rodante, pointing to the screen which shows the long, thin face of a bearded man imprinted on cloth. "My experiments show that they are genuine." He holds up a piece of cloth with bloodstains on it, and shows how the shapes correspond to those on the screen. "There is only one possible conclusion," the doctor says, his voice rising to a fervent crescendo. A gaunt-faced young man — looking not unlike the image before us — has been nodding vehemently beside me for some time. Now he leaps to his feet and cries: "That is the face of Jesus, our Lord! That is his blood on the Holy Shroud!" Afterwards I ask the young man if he is a seminary student training to be a priest. "Priest, not priest, what does it matter?" he replies, staring at me. "What matters is to believe."

The Turin Shroud, called the *sin-done* in Italian, the most contro-

versial relic in Christendom, goes on show next Saturday for the first time since 1978. Ten years after that showing, in 1988, it was pronounced a medieval fake. Yet hundreds of thousands of people from all over the world have already made telephone bookings to see the shroud in Turin Cathedral, even though they are likely to spend at least an hour queuing and then will spend barely a minute filing past the cloth. More than three million people are expected to see the shroud before June 14 when it is folded up and put away in the casket which has been its home for more than 300 years.

For both sceptics and believers, even a one-minute glimpse of the shroud will be worth the trouble — and will fuel further fierce debate. What they will see is a length of yellowing ancient linen measuring just over 14ft by 4ft and made of fine, tightly woven herringbone twill. It bears the scorch marks of several fires, notably one at Chambéry in southeastern France in 1532.

A "Shroud of Jesus" is first recorded as the property of the family of Goffredo de Charny, a Crusader knight, from whom it

Continued on page 2



The Turin Shroud: scientists said it was a medieval forgery but thousands will queue to see it when it goes on show for the first time in 20 years

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Magnus Linklater pads up north of the border to join one of Britain's most eccentric teams

Is googly a Scottish word?

I thought my cricketing career had come to a gentle close when I returned to live in Scotland. This, after all, is not a country which thrills to the whack of leather on willow. Football, yes, golf, certainly, rugby, curling, shinty, they are all part of the national character. Playing cricket, on the other hand, is regarded by most Scots as an aberration, something akin to Jamaica entering a bobsleigh team for the Winter Olympics.

Believing that my chances of a game north of the border were minimal, I packed away my trusty Duncan Fearnley Magnum heavy-hitter (highest score 82 n.o. Observer v Sunday Times circa 1984) and forgot about it.

That, however, was before I heard about The Beige, an Edinburgh side whose dedication to the sport is matched only by its determined eccentricity. I will come back to the name, because its blandness demands some explanation; but suffice it to say that the players manage to combine William Temple's description of cricket as "organised loafing" with a will to win which makes Allan

Border seem lackadaisical. Its standards are questionable enough to have recruited me to play in the occasional match — its oldest member by about 30 years. On the other hand, the side has made impressive progress in its short life of just ten years.

Last season, after a thrilling game against one of its main rivals, the Old Contemptibles, it came top of the Davidson and Robertson East of Scotland Cricket League (Grade E) to win promotion to the coveted Grade D. This year, who knows? Asked about its principal weakness, skipper Nathan Dicks identified "sloppiness and lack of discipline". There is agreement that rather more time is spent in the team pub, Black Bo's, than on fielding practice.

P.G. Wodehouse might have had them in mind when he described a side called The Hearty Lunatics. Reginald's Record Knock: "They belong to the school of thought which holds that the beauty of cricket is that, above all other games, it offers such magnificent opportunities for a long drink and a smoke in the shade."

Not that shade, or indeed light,

comes into it much. My first match for The Beige took place in average early season conditions for Edinburgh — light flurries of snow danced across the strip, turning occasionally to sleet. The mud at the Arthur's Seat end was definitely taking spin and the umpires called the game off only when visibility deteriorated to the point where the two batsmen just glimpsed each other as they crossed for a run. It gave me an early appreciation of the principal requirements for the sport in Scotland — at least three sweaters and a pair of longjohns.

Murray McKean, 31, founder and principal role model for The Beige, epitomises its unorthodox qualities. A nightclub promoter and publisher of a monthly magazine called *Shaver's Weekly*, which he describes as Edinburgh's only drinking magazine, he came late to the game after joining in an impromptu cricket session at a wedding reception. Hooked from the start, he bought a bat at Woolworths and started playing with a few friends using a tennis ball, with a tree-trunk as wicket. Later, when the side got going in earnest, the Woolworths bat was ceremonially burnt and a three-match series held with the Old Contemptibles for the local equivalent of the Ashes, known as "The Embers".

Murray's friend and flatmate, Gregor Sless, is the self-styled "quixotic and karate king" of the Edinburgh nightclub scene. He is also a self-taught leg-spin bowler who is having some trouble with his run-up. "It's a sort of part-skip, part-hop, part-dance," he says. "The batsmen don't know when

I'm going to deliver the ball, but then neither do I." Aly Watt, on the other hand, a middle-distance runner from Edinburgh Academy who, when I met him, wore a red Mohican hairstyle and a nose ring, is a demon fast bowler whose best figures last season were 5 for 7 and 4 for 0. He took up the game three years ago, but is so keen that he opted to turn up for net practice while his partner, who was expecting their first baby, was having contractions.

The side has undoubtedly benefited from some foreign blood. Tam Heiniz, Nathan's half-brother, comes from Barnsley and is of Polish-German descent. He scored 669 runs last season. "Lord" George Morstan, an actor, is half-Scots and half-Russian and has scored a record-breaking century for The Beige. Inzaman Ul Spartak, who runs a video shop, picked up the basics of cricket by watching US baseball on satellite television in his native Armenia. Saul Linklater (number two son),

6ft 7in tall, was taught cricket at public school in England. A powerful hitter, he would like to be remembered for his forward defensive stroke — one that no one else can recall him using. There is little agreement about why they called themselves The Beige. Some say it is because they can never keep their cricket flannels white. As for the season ahead, Nathan Dicks is quietly confident. "We've got the skills," he confided. "Now we've got to work on turning up."



Murray McKean, founder of The Beige cricket team, negotiates an obstacle on his way to the crease in The Meadows, Edinburgh

Continued from page 1
passed to the Savoy family (subsequently the Italian royal dynasty) in 1578. The cloth we see today was kept in the Guarini Chapel of Turin Cathedral for 300 years in a silver casket dating from 1694, and was venerated by the faithful.

It was only in 1898, in the age of Victorian science, that "proof" appeared: a lawyer from Asti, Secondo Pia, who was an early amateur photographer, was allowed to photograph the sacred cloth for that year's Universal Exhibition.

Pia was staggered to find that when he developed the picture, the negatives revealed the image of a man — bearded, 5ft 10in tall, with the marks of crucifixion on his hands and feet, a wound in his side, and bruises and cuts on his face and body.

Ninety years on, late 20th-century science added a new twist. After much cautious negotiation, three reputable laboratories in Oxford, Zürich and Tucson were each given a fragment of the fabric for carbon dating, with a medieval fabric and an ancient piece of cloth from the Tomb of Cleopatra at Thebes for comparison. The Oxford tests were conducted by Professor E. Hall and Professor R. Hedges and, like their Swiss and American counterparts, they concluded that it dated from between AD 1260 and 1390.

A medieval forgery, then — an image based on the familiar representations of Jesus in early Christian art, or perhaps not a conscious fake but the imprint of a Crusader crucified by the Saracens in mock imitation of Christ. For many that was the end of the story, vindicating earlier sceptics such as John Calvin, the great 16th-century Protestant reformer, who remarked after the Chambery fire: "When one shroud burns they find another one. They say it was saved from the flames, but the paint is still fresh."

Cardinal Anastasio Ballestrero, the then Archbishop of Turin, announced the result of the carbon-dating analysis with obvious relief, declaring that he had "never personally believed it to be a true relic of the Passion".

But many still believe. An "International Centre of Sionology" in Turin is devoted to disproving the fake theory. The believers, or Sionologists, are not all wild-eyed fanatics; many are sober scientists. They doggedly insist that the fake theory does not account for many mysteries which remain, including the key question of how the image was formed.

One of the Sionologists, Professor Nicola Cinquemani, a neurosurgeon at San Giovanni Hospital in Rome, has concluded that the image is not unlike those caused by radiation. "There were Japanese women at Hiroshima who were left with the flower patterns of their kimonos on their skin after the nuclear explosion," he says. "As in the shroud, the light images came out light and the darker images came out dark." Radiation would have been "beyond a medieval forger".

Some scientists, such as Dmitry Kuznetsov, a Russian physicist, say the fire damage at Chambery in 1532 could

have altered its carbon composition, making it seem "younger" than it really is. The author Ian Wilson, who has spent a quarter of a century researching the shroud, claims in his new book *The Blood and the Shroud* that there are "strands of DNA" on the cloth and that the carbon-dating tests were based on a "natural microbiological coating" on the corners — in other words, the fingerprints of medieval churchmen who held it up to the faithful.

It has certainly been patched and mended over the years. In any case, medieval fakers, Sionologists such as Dr Rodante argue, would not have had the technique or the desire to fake such meticulous details — a crude image would have been enough to fool the peasantry. And how, he asks triumphantly, could the forgers possibly have known that the invention of photography would bring the image to light six centuries later?

Thinking "good point", I

'There is no other object that seems to arouse so much love and hate'

followed him through a crush of admirers and fellow believers into the quiet of the vestry, where he described to me his experiments in the catacombs of Syracuse, in Sicily, the culmination of more than 50 years of devotion to "shroud studies" (he is 74).

Undeterred by local sceptics, some of whom suspected him of macabre activities among the ancient dead, Dr Rodante has set about recreating the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, cutting it out of the rock to match the Gospel descriptions, with a humidity of 90-100 per cent and a constant temperature of 12°C ("Syracuse is on the same parallel as Jerusalem, the climate is very similar").

He then took a linen cloth and sprayed it with a mixture of myrrh and aloes ("Joseph was joined by Nicodemus, who brought with him a mixture of myrrh and aloes, more than half a hundred-weight" — John 19, v.39). He also concluded from the Gospels and the shroud patterns that Jesus had sweated blood in his agony, "a rare phenomenon known as haemato-idrosis" and so made up a solution of "eight to ten parts sweat to one part blood".

Unable to use a corpse, whatever the locals might suspect, Dr Rodante wrapped the cloth impregnated with the spice mixture and the "bloody sweat" round a plastercast of the face on the shroud, and left it for 36 hours ("On the third day he rose again").

At first the results were unsatisfactory, but after some adjustments to the quantities and the mixtures, the cloth emerged with almost the same marks as the shroud. He shows me one of his experimental cloths — it certainly looks like the real thing. "And you notice there is a white gap



Don Giuseppe Ghiberti, deputy head of the Turin Commission for the Display of the Shroud: "I have seen hardened scientists burst into tears at the sight of it"



A member of the public helps Mario Trematore, a fireman, carry the shroud. "The force was in the cloth," said Trematore

on the shroud face, between the nose and the cheek. You know why? I shake my head. "Well, St John refers to a 'napkin around Jesus's head' (John 20:7-8, 20), which the disciples who entered the tomb saw 'rolled up in a place by itself'. I think this was the chin strap used to stop a corpse's mouth from falling open."

Is this science in the service of faith — or more evidence that the shroud has the power to entrance even the practical-minded and the level-headed? Proof that the shroud still inflames passions came when fire once again nearly destroyed it exactly a year ago. The fire broke out just before midnight on April 11, 1997, as a two-year restoration of the Guarini Chapel was nearing completion. A state dinner was in full swing next door at the Royal Palace in honour of Kofi Annan, the United Nations Secretary-General, and there were food warmers, genera-

tors, spotlights and heaters amid the tangle of scaffolding and electricity cables. Whatever caused the fire, it spread rapidly from the Palace to the Cathedral, and the chapel was engulfed by flames. A fireman called Mario Trematore earned national fame by unhesitatingly running through the flames and smashing the bullet-proof glass protecting the silver casket with a pickaxe.

"The force was in the cloth," he said afterwards — a remarkable statement from a man who, according to friends, is very matter-of-fact. "God gave me the strength to save the holy shroud." The casket and its precious contents emerged from the smoke and flames in front of 3,000 weeping spectators, including Cardinal Giovanni Salazarini, the present Archbishop and its official custodian. Although the preliminary inquiry ruled out arson, conspiracy theories flashed around the world. Was it the work of the Mafia

or a pre-millennial warning of doom after the Hale-Bopp comet? Vittorio Messori, a Turin writer on the shroud, told me it was "no accident" that the fire broke out on a Friday night, "the night Christ's body was wrapped in linen and laid in the tomb."

"There is no other object which arouses so much love and hate," Messori said. "It has everything — Jesus, the Templars who brought it to Europe, science."

The faithful may soon face a new test of their patience. The possibility that the shroud contains DNA has inspired a film project launched in London this week. Entitled *Clone*, it will portray an attempt to clone Jesus Christ from the shroud DNA and so precipitate the Second Coming. According to the film-maker David Rolfe, last year's fire in the Guarini Chapel was an arson attack intended to conceal a bungled attempt to steal the shroud and obtain the DNA.

For Sionologists, the fact



Crowds gather after fire breaks out in Turin Cathedral

was given by Margherita de Charny to Ludovico the Second of Savoy. A House of Savoy legal document in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris records the transaction.

A further boost for the believers comes from Turin itself, where Pier Luigi Bollone, a professor of forensic medicine, and Nello Balossino, a professor of computer science, say they have detected the faint impression on the cloth of a Roman coin dating from the reign of Tiberius just above the left eye of the face on the cloth. The coin, they say, bears the letters TIB and CAI, for Tiberius Caesar, and LIS-L for year, 1 for 10 and S for six — the 16th year of Tiberius's reign, or AD 29 by modern reckoning, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judaea.

Professor Balossino has compared the coin with Palestinian coinage of the same period in the British Museum, and points out that it was a "common Hebrew practice to place coins on or near the eyes after death". According to Maria Grazia Siliato, an archaeologist who published a book on the shroud last year, there is "barely detectable Greco-Latin writing" round the face reading "Jesus, the Nazarene".

Don Giuseppe Ghiberti, deputy head of the Turin Commission for the Display of the Shroud, is heartened by such "proof" that the carbon dating might be wrong. "I have seen hardened scientists burst into tears at the sight of the shroud," he says. The

shroud "not only shows the likeness of the man who was wrapped in it, it also shows marks of blood on the forearms and around the waist, with evidence of 50 blows".

Don Giuseppe deduces that "there were two flagellants, one on the right and one on the left, with orders to hit the man on all parts of the body except near the heart. The cuts and scratches on the forehead and nape make one think of the crown of thorns on Jesus's head". There is also evidence of "bruising on the shoulders from carrying the crossbar".

Professor Cinquemani, the neurosurgeon who has constructed a "working model" of the Crucifixion, believes Jesus died not from asphyxiation but from a wound in the right shoulder, which severed an artery. The body was leaning to the right on the cross "because the right lung filled with blood".

Amid this barrage from "scientific believers", the Pope has remained cautious. The Pontiff is to visit the shroud on May 24. "It is certainly a relic," he says carefully, "and if so many believe in it, then their conviction is not without foundation." Not exactly a ringing endorsement. But as *L'Espresso*, the Turin newspaper, puts it: "Perhaps it does not matter that scientists have yet to give a decisive verdict. It is a precious legacy, both for Christianity and for Turin."

See the shroud, page 26

هكذا من الأصل

I don't trust the National Trust

Ruthless
marketing is
killing our
gardens, says
Stephen
Anderton

Sissinghurst
Biddenden 5

When garden enthusiasts come together, sooner or later the conversation turns to the National Trust, and words like "clinical" and "lifeless" are bandied about. But is this criticism fair, or even true?

To be sure, there is legitimate cause for concern, simply because the National Trust has such an awesomely powerful grasp of the nation's historic gardens. Never before in Britain and perhaps in the world has such a varied collection of living artwork been held in one set of hands.

However, like it or hate it, the National Trust has made gardens and garden-visiting one of the great marketable tourist attractions of Great Britain. And, in turn, gardens represent the most popular and lucrative face of the Trust.

But there is a price to be paid for the corporate ownership of England's private Edens. Many people now say they all look the same, they are run by committee and have no personal driving force. Of course it is not so — you could not hope to find a more varied set of gardens, from the great estates of the past 500 years down to cottages and terraced houses. But they are marketed and presented with a ruthless uniformity which would kill the soul of any garden.

There was a time when the National Trust needed more members. Remember those "I am One in a Million" stickers in rear windscreens just a few years ago? Now there are 2.75 million members and growing. But how do you please 2.75 million people all of the time? Isn't it destructive



Sissinghurst is a spectacular garden but the many visitors are irritated by a uniformly high standard of maintenance, ubiquitous laminated plant labels and overall lack of inspiration in the planting

madness for the Trust to try? The Trust's marketing wing obviously sees a need to present a brand image, to make people (and potential members) feel at home whenever they step into a National Trust property. From the absurdly tasteful olive-green traffic cones and squeaky-clean lavatories to the reek of potpourri, it is the same from Bath to Berwick. Before you get into the garden, you have already been bombarded by familiar images. The brain's receptors freeze.

Ladies of a certain age and class smile the same smile from ticket offices. Some, jovial and persistent, will try to pressgang you into taking out membership. There are the same appeal notices, the same leaflets for other properties, the same gift shop full of the same gifts.

How can any garden, experienced through this heavy-duty filter, feel different?

Gardens are there to be experienced through the mind and the senses, and as deeply



or shallowly as you choose. They are not there to be chopped up and force-fed to people, as a marketable "Experience". If small private gardens seem remarkably different from corporate owned gardens, it is often because they simply do not have the money to compete in the Great Marketing Race.

The bigger an organisation, the faster it is obliged to jump the legislative hurdles. Health and safety legislation, for example, is an appalling intruder. Gardens are supposed to be peaceful or exciting, and sometimes both; but not safe.

Yet the law requires paths to be uniformly even, ponds to be ludicrously shallow, drops to be protected and hazard signs to be conspicuous. It is traffic law applied to gardens.

So how should the Trust free its gardens? One frequent suggestion is to put one person in charge of a garden: a head gardener, a manager or an owner who can stamp some personality on the place.

The National Trust has moved toward this, giving individual site managers a responsibility for finances, marketing and presentation, which would have been unheard of ten years ago.

Yet still it will not work, because in big, modern, caring organisations staff are on the Annual Appraisal system. Everyone must "meet identifiable and quantifiable targets" to get a pay rise. Not enough, then, to keep the place looking good. Continuing quality alone is not sufficient: last year's targets must be raised or there's no rise, no Marks & Spencer vouchers.

And so the marketing impulse keeps the upper hand. Marketing aside, what else prompts people to say that the gardens are looked after and developed in a "clinical" way? Are they really at a dreary, committee-bound standstill?

Is it the uniformly high standard of maintenance — the Sissinghurst superlative — which secretly giggles; or the ubiquitous laminated plant labels? Is it the generosity with which conspicuous benches are provided for visitors? Glorious, romantic Sissinghurst is beset by benches, as if it were an impertinence to expect people to sit on the grass.



Is it the self-effacing way in which the Trust tries to garden, as if the very inspiration behind the current garden planting is invisible, and only a tribute to dead men? Where is the celebration of its current gardeners, and the advisers who plan the planting?

The Trust points out that almost all gardens are the result of a cross-fertilisation of talents not found in just one person. Hidcote, the archetypal Arts and Crafts Cotswold garden, came about through the offices of owner Lawrence Johnston, his head gardener, and designer Norah Lindsay. The massive 18th-century landscape garden at Stowe, Buckinghamshire, was driven by a succession of owners and string of designers.

The Trust is only doing the same when it runs gardens through the triumvirate of agent, head gardener and gardens adviser. It combines the historical and aesthetic with the practical, and an overview of gardens generally. It's not a bad recipe.



But alongside the criticism of uniformity in the Trust's gardens is the feeling that they ought to be doing something new. Well, what? It would be like the National Gallery asking Hockney to give all the Old Masters a bit more zing. But unlike paintings, gardens are living things. Why shouldn't the Trust give some of its lesser historic gardens a suitable, vigorous, large-scale contemporary development to keep

them alive? Whether it welcomes it or not, the Trust is seen as the pinnacle of English gardening. And even though conservation may be its prime aim, for the sake of its public image — as the gallery of the nation's gardens — it should now look for, or make, some major modern gardens to add to its historic portfolio. It should let the new dazzle just like the old. It would be a breath of fresh air for staff and visitors alike.

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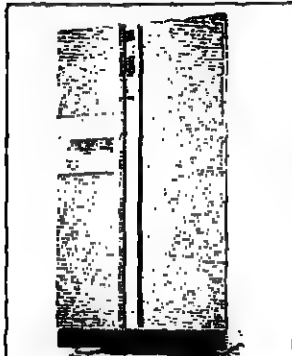
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SHOP WATCH

■ **Debenhams** has sparked a trend for top-name designers at high street stores. Neisha Crosland's tactile scarves are the firm's latest launch. Painted silk on georgette, silk satins, and devore evening wraps are in her signature cool, watery blues and lilacs, plus fuchsia and black. Call 0171-408 4444 for your nearest store.

■ **The Pier** has launched a mail-order catalogue. Snap up its sheer panels embroidered with coloured dots (£29.95), brilliant for curtain-shy decorators, or an abstract flower rug (£199), which passes muster as something much more exclusive. Call 0171-814 5020 for a catalogue.

■ **Buyers and Sellers** is the big gun to try if you're sourcing white goods, or coloured and stainless steel. It stocks goods from more than 50 companies and has a



Fridge by Buyers and Sellers

constant array of bargains. There is a free advice line and nationwide delivery. Find Buyers and Sellers at 120-122 Ladbroke Grove, London W10 (0171-229 1947).

■ **Virgin Vie**, Virgin's new chain of cosmetics shops, is gaining pace. It has well-priced lotteries with a New Age slant, aimed at busy women. Who could resist products with names like Peace, Energy and Glee? The latest branch to open is in Castle Mee in Norwich. Call 0870-909 9092 for a mail-order catalogue.

■ **UPDATE:** Jigsaw Juniors has opened its flagship shop at 97 Fulham Road, London SW3 (0171-823 8915). You've got the curtains, now get the walls to match. Designers Guild's new paints are in vivid lilacs, limes and blues. Call 0171-243 7300 for stockists. Nicole Farhi's eclectic home range has arrived at her store at 193 Sloane Street, London SW3 (0171-235 0877).

JUDITH WILSON

A crafty cook in Kent

TV chef Michael Barry pays a nostalgic visit to a store which answers all his shopping needs. Michael Cable reports

When people talk about the best thing since sliced bread it conjures up a vivid childhood memory for Michael Barry. Television's "Crafty Cook" was five years old when one of the early automatic slicing machines was delivered to his uncle's bakery in the South Wales village where his mother's family lived.

"The family gathered to watch as the first loaf was ceremoniously placed in the machine," he recalls. "It was a very basic affair involving a series of rotating knives. My uncle switched it on and after a lot of whirring and banging the loaf popped out, ready-cut and wrapped in waxed paper. It seemed like magic."

More than 50 years later, he has only to walk through the door of Burgess Stores in Goudhurst, Kent, to be reminded of those days in Resolven, West Glamorgan, when he was occasionally allowed to help drive the horse and cart with which another uncle, a dairy farmer, used to deliver the milk.

"Burgess Stores is one of the few places I know that is just like the sort of shops I went to as a kid," he says, admiring wooden clothes pegs, rubber bath plugs, bottles of strong local ale with names such as Old Dick and Kentish Gold, as well as his favourite Thai sweet and sour sauce.

Although Burgess Stores dates back to 1831 and remained in the Burgess family for 140 years, its appeal for Mr Barry is not simply nostalgic or sentimental. "I'm very old-fashioned and I like old-fashioned things — but only when they work," says the broadcasting executive-turned-celebrity cook whose latest recipe book, *Crafty Fast Food*, is aimed at supermarket shoppers.

He says: "Village shops are often run by people who see them as a form of semi-retirement and they tend to be characterised by cheap brands and wrinkled vegetables, which is why they can't compete. But this place makes a real effort."

Within months of taking over the shop three years ago, John Maxwell Jones, the 62-year-old proprietor, and his wife, Elaine, succeeded in reaching the final of Kent's Best Village

my favourite shop

Shop competition. Customers come for their local produce, from jams, pickles and sloe wine to sausages called Corkers and the chocolate-coated, roasted Kentish cobnuts known as Platinums.

These rare delights are mostly supplied by members of Kentish Fare, the association of regional food and drink producers of which Mr Barry, who lives in Canterbury, happens to be the enthusiastic and crusading chairman.

He says: "I used to drive around places that were producing all sorts of marvellous goodies, often on a very small scale, and it struck me that it was crazy that I was driving all over Kent to find the stuff. We have put in place a network and a distribution system of restaurants, shops and cafes that enables them to get their produce out."

His involvement with Kentish Fare is just one aspect of a life that has been so busy and varied over the years that he adopted a second identity to avoid confusing people.

It was as Michael Bukht, son of a Pakistani diplomat, that he joined the BBC as a trainee, rising to become editor of the long-running current affairs programme *24 Hours*. He was then the founding programme controller of Capital Radio before setting up Classic FM.

Interested in food and cooking from an early age — his mother was a domestic science teacher — it was while at Capital that he quite unexpectedly made a new professional name for himself as a celebrity cook after standing in rather too successfully as holiday relief for the regular presenter of the recipe slot. "I'm afraid the poor lady never did get her job back," he says.

Forced to reduce his workload after being diagnosed last year with Ménière's disease, an incurable inner-



ear complaint triggered by stress, he has stepped down as programme controller of Classic FM but will continue to appear on his BBC *Food And Drink* programme and to write.

Neither the minor dietary restrictions imposed by his doctors nor those he has followed since committing to his father's Muslim faith, when he was 18, have cramped the culinary style of someone who makes a point of defining himself as a cook rather than a chef.

"The difference is that chefs dress up in funny clothes and cook the same food every night for different people for money, while cooks don't

dress up and cook different food every night for the same people for no money," he says.

Married to actress and dancer Jenny Jones, with four children aged 18 to 32, he says he welcomes the chance of taking things easier. "I've been going at it hammer and tongs for 35 years and I'm quite glad to devote more time to gardening, sailing, seeing my grandchildren and simply cooking for pleasure," he says.

● Burgess Stores, High Street, Goudhurst, Kent TN17 1AL (01580 21120). Open: Mon to Fri 9am-6pm, Sat 8.45am-6pm, Sun 10.30am-5pm.

Michael Barry (above): "It reminds me of shops when I was a child"

Burgess Stores in Goudhurst specialises in produce from all over Kent

GADGETS

FEW experiences are more miserable than arriving exhausted at a campsite and then having to spend up to an hour erecting the tent before you can shelter from the rain. Chukka-Tents go a long way to reducing such problems since they are self-erecting.

It takes less than three seconds for a Chukka-Tent to erect itself when tossed into the air. The tents are made from lightweight nylon hung on springy oil-tempered steel tensile hoops, which is why they open just as easily as automatic umbrellas.

Chukka-Tents, designed in America, come in all sizes.



The Chukka-Tent

from a Kids' Play Tent to the top-of-the-range Casa Grande, which can sleep six.

When camping out, you will invariably need a little torch, and Polaroid's sleek PolaPulse Light fits the bill. The flat, disposable torch has a halogen bulb, so the light is exceptionally bright. The drawback is that it only works when the button is held down.

TIM WAPSHOTT

● Self-erecting tents cost from £42 to £275 plus p&p from Chukka-Tent (01362 43660). PolaPulse Light, £4.95. From The Gadget Shop (01482 871001).



BELOW: This S.O.A.P. dish (£9) from Purves and Purves (0171-580 8223) is simply designed and easy to clean. Try a toy-filled soap from Irish mail order company Grimes & Co (00 353 166 75627). As well as this frog soap, there are duck, turtle, pig and ladybird versions (£8.95 plus p&p)

RIGHT: Three seahorses, two kissing and one looking on, adorn this chrome soap dish (£7.95). From Liberty (0171-734 1234)

ABOVE: Mickey Mouse hands grip on to the taps of this Fantasia-type ceramic bathtub soap dish (£4.99). From The Disney Store (0171-287 6558)

RIGHT: This heart-shaped chrome soap dish (£6.95) is ridged, allowing excess water to drain away and keeping soap sludge-free. From Liberty, as left

LEFT: This retro melamine soap dish (£4.58 inc. p&p) is made of black metal and stands on its own legs. Mail order from Bliss (01789 400077)

RIGHT: Mui's chrome soap dish (£6.95) is simple and minimalist. Mui also has delicious smelling glycerine soaps for 95p each. Choose from mandarin, citrus fruit, lemon or avocado. Call 0171-437 7503

MARY ANN PERCY

RIGHT: In vivid green rubber, the "Octopuss" soap dish (£5.95) from Kozio is fun and easy to clean. From Liberty, as above

RIGHT: Simple, black wire flower-shaped soap dish, just £2.50 from South American specialists Mexique (0181-392 2345)

RIGHT: Starfish ceramic soap dish (£17.99) from Homebase (0845 801800), decorated in muted tones of green and pink

ABOVE: Emily Readett-Bayley (0171-231 3939) specialises in bamboo homewares. Her soap dishes sell in The General Trading Company (0171-734 0413) and selected House of Fraser stores for £7.50 (or £8.50 mail order)

Don't be a lather lout

WHOEVER you are and whatever your bathing habits, you will (hopefully) have soap in the house. Where you store it will determine how long it lasts. Kept in a wet vessel that retains water it will soon become a soft, white and impossible-to-hold sludgy mass; held in a dish that allows it to dry and ensures it is always in the same place when you come to use it, it will last for longer and be a pleasure to lather with.

Wood and metal have lately joined more traditional materials moving out of the kitchen and into the bathroom.

Ceramic dishes, always popular, are still available, but now more contemporary materials such as aluminium, rubber, plastic and chrome have muscled their way into the soap dish market. The new, leggy Octopuss

soap dish from Kozio, for example, is made from the latest in techno-plastic soft polypropylene, which, according to Sophie Hubble, bath house buyer for Liberty, was chosen for its pliable and non-slip qualities.

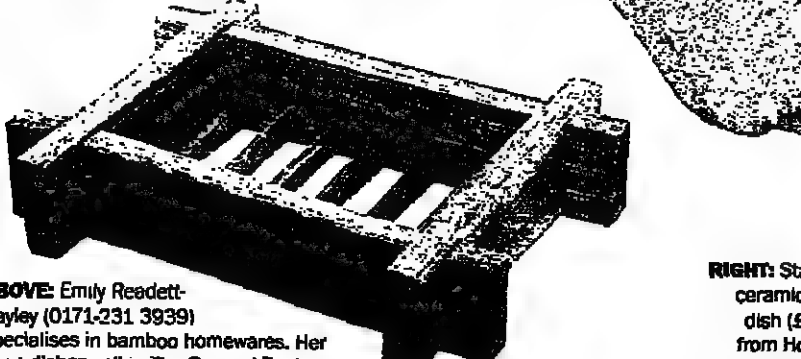
Should you fancy a bathroom companion, the inflatable parrot from The Source doubles as a soap dish and a floating toy. Or, for an earlier look, try Emily Readett-Bayley's soap dishes, fashioned from pure bamboo that she grows herself. But as well as looking good, dishes should be practical: easy to clean, small enough to fit on a small bath rim, and well-perforated to allow water to drain from them. All that then has to be done is to fill it with a generously scented bar and enjoy the lather.



LEFT: The green rubber of this soap dish from The Source (0171-937 2626) will ensure that it doesn't scratch your bathtub, or slip into it. A bargain at 89p



ABOVE: Floatable, fashionable and fun for kids is the green and red parrot soap dish from The Source, as above. Yes, it could be punctured, but for £1.50 who cares?



ABOVE: Emily Readett-Bayley (0171-231 3939) specialises in bamboo homewares. Her soap dishes sell in The General Trading Company (0171-734 0413) and selected House of Fraser stores for £7.50 (or £8.50 mail order)

Beyond the pale

Calvin Klein describes his collection of white summerwear as "intrinsically elegant and naturally unassuming". Rei Kawakubo, the Comme des Garçons designer whose summer collection was almost entirely made of white cotton, says white was the only way to "get back to real basics".

White clothing this summer is not just about looking cool — it is about appearing pure, simple and unconcerned with clutter. It is the fashion equivalent of a steel chair.

Nicole Farhi has always been a fan of white. "There is nothing better than a crisp white shirt or more fresh than white linen in the summer," she says. Designer Ally Capellino says: "It can be the best way to show up what you have had for dinner or it can look a million dollars." But most designers agree that it is the perfect way to show up this season's clean, simple lines.

"It is really the most modern colour," says the knitwear designer Julien Macdonald. "It accentuates the face and is a fresh alternative to black."

As well as staples such as suits, dresses and jeans, this season's key styles are in every high-street store. Simple drawstring Calvin Klein lookalike pants are stocked by Marks & Spencer (£40), Warehouse (£40), Jigsaw (£64) and Dorothy Perkins (£30); capri pants by M&S (£28), Warehouse (£40) and Top Shop (£28); and white linen shirts by everyone from Laura Ashley (£50) to Armani Jeans (£99).

If you don't have the colouring to carry off pure white, mix it with this season's brights (orange, pink and turquoise) or black. "I was in Miami, where people were wearing white, but with slashes of black and it looked very cool," says Ben de Lisi. "Whatever you wear it with, it transports you to summer."

LISA GRAINGER



ABOVE: Delicate side-tie chiton tunic, £210; stretch cotton shorts, £36, Ghost, (0181-990 3121). Leather open-toe ankle-tie sandals, £50, Ravel, stores nationwide.

RIGHT: Fine sheer-knit ribbed cardigan, £100, Fenn Wright & Manson, Fenwick's, Bond Street, W1 (0171-629 8181). Cropped cotton trousers, £86; grey rib-knit hat, £65, Sonia Rydel, Browns, Fortnum & Mason and Harrods.

FAR RIGHT: Strapless cotton top, £171; matching trousers, £136, Straness, Selfridges and stores nationwide (0171-823 3799). Pink mules, £285, Gina (0171-235 2932).

BELOW: Fine embroidered tie-front cotton top, £29.95, Monsoon, 5 Bakers Arcade, Kensington High Street, W8 (0171-313 3000). Cotton skirt, £40, Warehouse, 98 King's Road, SW3 (0171-278 3491).



BELOW: Single-breasted one-button jacket, £79; matching trousers, £34.99, Kookai, 123d Kensington High Street, W8 (0171-937 4411). Crinkle muslin fitted shirt, £27.95, Monsoon, as left.



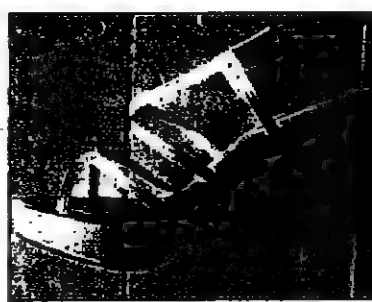
THREE OF A KIND

Who says white stilettos are naïf? With a wispy white dress and bright pink toe-pails, they are the ultimate accessory to show off a pair of bare tanned legs. LG



LEFT: White leather fine strappy slingback mules, £180, Jimmy Choo, 20 Motcomb Street, SW2 (0171-235 6006).

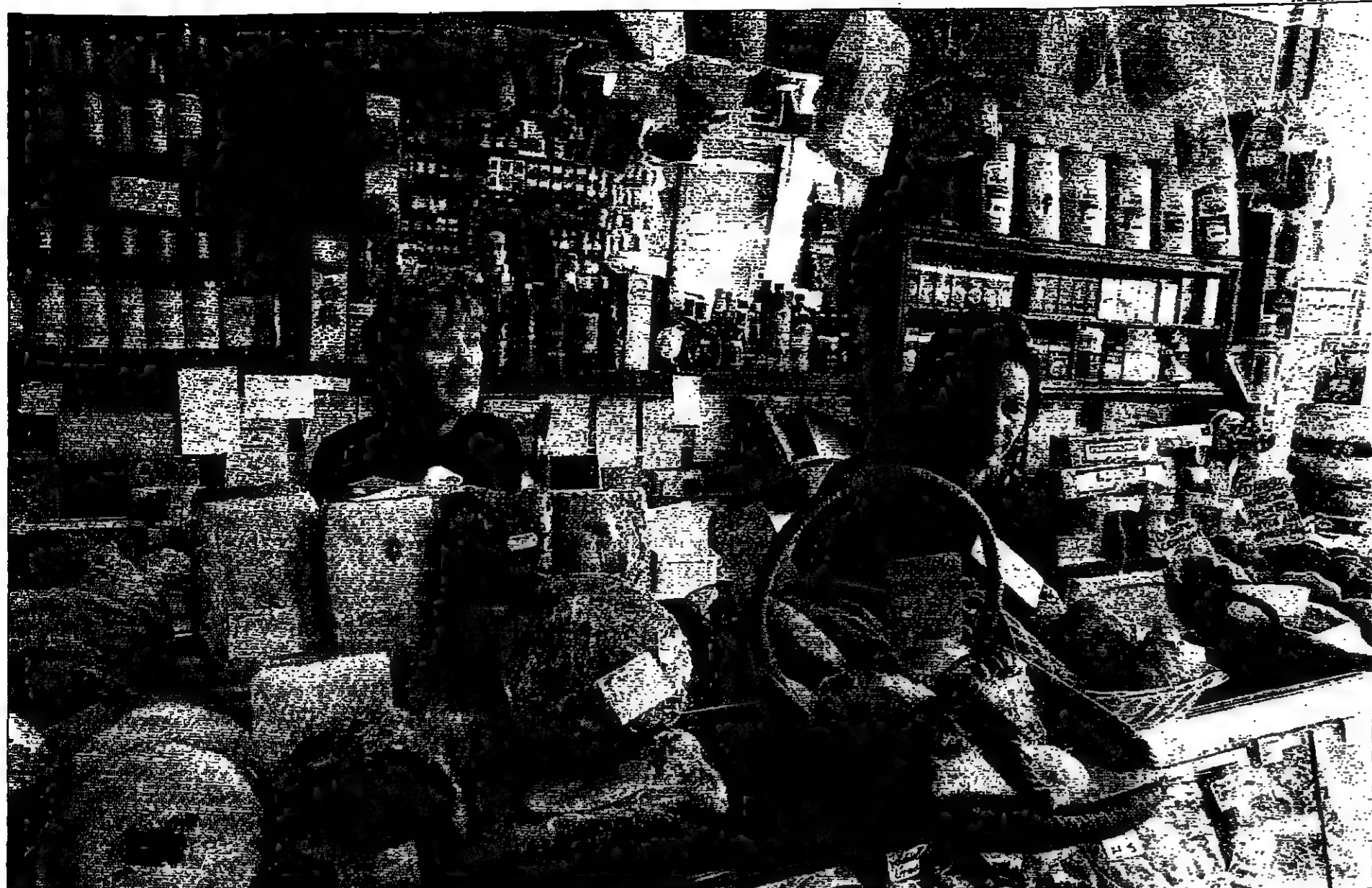
RIGHT: White satin criss-cross fine-heel sandals, £45, Faith stores nationwide (0800 289237).



LEFT: White patent ankle-tie open-toe sandals, £275, Manolo Blahnik, 49-51 Old Church Street, SW3 (0171-352 8822).

Photographs by Nick Farrell at Artist Group Management, LA, California. Hair and make-up by Noriko Kerns for Estée Lauder, using Double Wear Stay in Place Makeup SPF10; Compact Disc eyeshadows and True Lipstick in Sugar Rose. Styling by Amanda Uppel. Model: Joy.





Friendly and knowledgeable service, such as that offered at Bon Gout delicatessen in Bristol, has helped persuade supermarkets to introduce their own specialist staff

Big stores start to think small

Is the personal touch returning to Britain's main food retailers, asks John Whitley

For more than 30 years the supermarket giants have dominated British food shopping with their policy of "pile it high and sell it cheap", which steamrollered ordinary shops and individual producers almost out of existence. Now they have gone into reverse and are attempting to reconstitute those very factors of personal service and specialist produce by opening mini-shops inside the mega-stores.

Last month, the acknowledged brand leader of the chains, Marks & Spencer, opened its latest, 97,000 sq ft store at Cribbs Causeway, on the outskirts of Bristol, incorporating a shop within a store — a delicatessen where specially trained staff slice hams and whole cheeses to order, dole out samples for braver customers to taste and, for the first time at M&S, produce hot snacks and roast chicken from a rotisserie.

By next month, there will be six of these enclaves in stores from Lisburn and Warrington to Camberley and Gateshead, established at a cost estimated to be in excess of £10 million, with 25 more planned by the end of the year.

They are the opening shots in a new battle for market supremacy between the four most powerful retailers, and for the first time the weapons are quality and service instead of cheapness or convenience. Tesco, the inventor of the pile-it-

high philosophy, is aiming upmarket with the launch in 200 stores of a new range of meals claimed to be of restaurant standard, and is investing heavily to persuade big farmers to grow organic produce.

Sainsbury's says it is equally eager to build the organic market and is experimenting with smaller, more intimate town centre stores. Even lordly Waitrose admits that it has been evolving new serving and buying strategies.

All are driven not by philanthropy, but by a conviction that customers in general have caught the foodie disease — an addiction to the unfamiliar, the exotic and healthier dishes they have encountered on trips abroad, or seen on cookery seminars featured on television and in newspapers.

"You can see it happening almost by the week," says Steve Heywood, manager of Sainsbury's flagship store in Clapham, south London. "Customers are behaving like the chefs they see on TV — they want to get back to the original ingredients and make the dishes themselves, rather than get them ready-made. They come in with the recipes propped up on the trolleys and tell us what produce to buy instead of us telling them, as we used to."



The delicatessen counter at Marks & Spencer's new outlet in Bristol

Mike Raycroft, a Tesco director, can measure the shift since he joined the chain in 1964. "The only cheese we had then was Irish Cheddar, Danish Cheddar, English Cheddar and Dutch Edam, so there's no doubt that there is a demand for more sophisticated foods today."

TV endorsement is very important — you know that if something has appeared on the Food and Drink programme it will go off the shelves the next morning.

'Customers behave like the chefs they see on TV'

But Mr Raycroft suggests that travel and publicity are only partly responsible for changing tastes. "The customer develops a taste for what's on offer. Now we can get lemon grass from Chile, for instance. People want it, but I'm not sure that they wanted it before it was there."

This personal approach is central to the supermarket revolution and is exactly what Ian Bentley is seeking at M&S with his deli counters. It is, he admits cheerfully, a return to old-fashioned values.

In search of the magic formula, he despatched a senior selector, Sandra Ziles, and a team of specialists to scour stores overseas in search of new designs and products. "We went to shops in Dublin, Berlin and Milan," says Ms Ziles. "and then 32 supermarkets in the US."

We probably sampled a chicken from the rotisserie in each one — I got pretty tired of chicken."

Ms Ziles has drawn heavily on the delicatessens she visited in Manhattan, notably Balducci's and the celebrated Dean & DeLuca, though it's hard to see how their odoriferous, prosciutto-swagged, Twenties' Italian look — not unlike Camisa in London or Valvona & Crolla in Edinburgh — can be reproduced in a British supermarket.

"I want to get colour, chunkiness and immediacy into the display," she explains. "We'll have salads freshly dressed by the server; fresh herbs, roasted vegetables and big bowls of olives and fruit salad. The staff must eat a bit of everything they display so that they can offer an opinion."

This rejection of the help-yourself, minimal staff policy of the past 30 years with its chilly, impersonal cabinets and uninterested trolley-pushers means that staff for the new counters must acquire more leisurely skills. To achieve this loosening up, M&S sent 12 hopefuls for a week-long training session with a supermarket chain it owns in America.

Liberated from the British supermarket straitjacket, they learnt how to turn their work into a piece of theatre, cutting meat in front of the counter, doling out nibbles, wrapping goods with a flourish. Gradually, a long-suppressed eagerness to share enthusiasm surfaced.

SO WHO KNOWS BEST?

SUPERMARKETS still have some way to go before they can claim to provide the expertise and service of the small shops they are attempting to imitate.

At my local Safeway in London, I asked: "Could you recommend a nice piece of cheese to go with some pudding wine?" and was introduced to Carol, who ventured: "How about something with some fruit in it?" There was Wensleydale with cranberries or apricots. "Are those pasteurised or unpasteurised?" I asked. By now Carol was losing her patience. "It doesn't say on the packet," she replied wearily. "I'm sorry I couldn't be more help but I don't really eat cheese." Carol apologised. Her honesty was admirable but begged the question of why she was serving cheese at all.

Next I went to a small delicatessen, in Spitalfields, in the City of London. After I had run through my spiel, the assistant told me that most cheese would go with a dessert wine, and that I should serve several different pieces. I was then offered samples. The assistant was clearly enthusiastic and, more importantly, gave the impression that he knew what he was talking about.

JOE WARWICK

It is this matronlyness that generates customer loyalty and, Mr Bentley hopes, enough extra sales to justify the floor space that his mini-shops pinch from the pre-packed cabinets. "Having an expert to talk to encourages people to buy and to experiment," he says.

Only sales figures will determine whether these bold experiments eventually turn into a full-blown revolution. Healthy profits must be made, after all, and the chill hand of accountancy still rules the fresh faces behind the counters.

Drink



Jane MacQuitty

Add sparkle to Easter celebrations and keep the clouds at bay with a few bottles of choice bubbly

Easter, unlike Christmas, generally involves the arrangement of only one big meal — tomorrow's Sunday lunch. But, just like Christmas, most busy wine drinkers will still have a wide range of palates to accommodate this weekend: young and old, simple and sophisticated.

Fizz is still the best spring bottle I know to raise the spirits, and plenty of places are offering champagne discounts now. Among them are Safeway's 25 per cent discount on its own-label Albert Edienne Brut (£12.99 to £9.74), and Sainsbury's reduction on its Extra Dry bubbly, from £12.95 to £9.44. Better value still if you buy six for £8.97.

But neither of these blends currently shine. Instead, try Sainsbury's gorgeous Chardonnay Brut from Moineon in Burgundy — a real creamy, lemon and marzipan-stashed methode champenoise snip at £4.11 a bottle, or buy six for £3.90 each.

The only downside here is Sainsbury's dreary label, not what you would expect from this Bank-side Gallery-supporting super-market. JS design team take note.

Alternatively, try a more expensive transfer method bubbly from Australia: the rich, peachy, biscuit-scented 1996 Nottage Hill Sparkling Chardonnay from Hardy's (Sainsbury's, £5.76; Safeway, Fullers, Somerfield and Gateway, £6.99).

As the weather has been so mixed of late, consider serving the youngest, liveliest white wines from the newly arrived 1997 vintage. Their fresh-as-a-daisy flavours will at least encourage sunny thoughts even when it's pouring down.

Landmann's new 1997 Bln 70 is a fine, musky, grapey, invigorating spring blast with plenty of grassy, lime-scented fruit and a touch of oak on the finish (Ooddins and the Victoria Wine Company, £4.99).

Chardonnay continues to be the safe white wine grape choice, so tuck into the dirt-cheap, apple, nutty 1997 Louis Chatelet Chardonnay, Vin de Pays d'Oc, £3.49 from Fullers.

For a classy white burgundy, check out Victoria Wine's toothsome deal on the splendid, rich, hazelnut biscuit-scented 1995 Louis Jadot Chardonnay, £7.99 reduced to £6.49 a bottle if you buy two.

At the other end of the spectrum, a bold, buttered-toast bottle whose fat flavour could even handle Easter lamb is Petzer's 1995 Barrel

Select Chardonnay (Tesco, £7.99; Safeway, £8.99).

Easter's main dish is Paschal lamb, and although you could serve a big white, its best partner is a tender, plummy Beaujolais. The combination of the melt-in-the-mouth flavours of the new season's rosy-pink lamb and a top, juicy Beaujolais vintage year is a gastronomic treat.

The best value Beaujolais I have tasted from the 1995 vintage is Georges Dubouef's glorious, vibrant Beaujolais Villages, positively oozing with cherry and plum fruit (Thresher, Fullers, Tesco and Majestic Wine, £4.99).

Britain's drinkers have lapped up 10,000 cases of this wine, so stock up now before Dubouef moves on to the 1996 vintage, as it surely will soon. If you want to push the boat out, try the richer, fruitier and more floral 1995 St Amour

Domaine des Pierres from Trichard (Majestic, £8.49).

One 1996 that I do approve of, and is also great value, is Somerfield and Gateway's perfumed, plummy 1996 Brouilly, £6.49 a bottle and great with Easter lamb.

One step up in intensity from Beaujolais, in the southernmost extremity of the Burgundy region, is a delicate pinot noir. Again, Victoria Wine has a good deal on its handsome, gamey, 1995 Louis Jadot Pinot Noir (Victoria Wine, £7.99, or £6.49 if you buy two) with sufficient of this grape's ripe, plummy fruit not to overwhelm the first of the new season's lamb.

If, like me, you intend to spend the remainder of tomorrow gorging on Easter eggs, you will need something in your glass to refresh your palate between bites. Last week's dry, tangy Penfolds Magill Tawny dessert wine is still the best, cheapest, chocolatey bottle I know, particularly if you buy it at £1 off at £4.99 from Victoria Wine Cellars.

The upmarket, richer version of this is Seppelt's rich, toffee and walnut-licked DP 63 Rutherglen Show Muscat (Ooddins, £7.49 a half-bottle). If simnel cake, rather than chocolate, is your Easter indulgence, try a surprisingly good kirsch, Hoppe's Kirsch de Cuisine (Sainsbury's £7.55, Thresher, Wine Rack and Bottoms Up, £7.99), with its strong, liquid marzipan scent and bitter, cherry liquor. Happy Easter.

NEXT WEEK: English wines

STAR BUYS

1997 Ironstone Semillon-Chardonnay, Western Australia, Unwins, £8.19; Majestic Wine, Tesco and Fullers, £6.49.

1997 Ironstone Shiraz-Grenache, Western Australia, stockists and prices as left, and at James Nicholson, 27a Killyleagh Street, Crossgar, Co Down, £8.49.

David Hohnan's latest Western Australia pair makes a great Easter duo. The

white is an invigorating lemon and grapefruit zest-stashed wine with 13 per cent alcohol. Ironstone's blended white is a spring-into-summer bottle, as great with food as it is without.

This year's blend is a shiraz-grenache combo. Spicy, earthy tones from the shiraz, while grenache grapes from old vines give an intriguing sweet yet bitter cherry note. Splendid to see Ironstone continue with its 14.5 per cent alcohol content.

BEST OF THE REST

Unwines' April wheeze is to knock 15 per cent off any two bottles of Australian wine, which brings Ironstone down from £5.49 to £5.52 a bottle. Other good Aussie deals include £1.05 off the 1996 Tyrell's Old Winery Pinot Noir and 1996 Old Winery Semillon (£5.94). Best's wondrous 1993 Great Western Shiraz and Cabernet drop £1.50 each to £8.49.

GINGER BEER TO RABBIT ABOUT



HOT FROM JAMAICA

THE DRINKS THAT TIME FORGOT

Party Seven

"WHAT do we want? Watneys!" Not the now-cult Red Barrel brew, but the old "Special". Sadly, there was nothing special about it, save that it could be purchased en route to World Cup success in weighty six- or seven-pint formulae, complete with its own cunning little tin-opener device: the perfect accompaniment to instant mashed potato and the cardboard-flavoured white sliced of old. It tasted like... victory!

I HAVE always believed that you should never use fresh ingredients when they are out of season. This is for several reasons. Firstly, and most importantly, because produce from South America often does not bear up to comparison with its native cousin (asparagus is the obvious example).

Secondly there is the cost implication — high import tariffs that the retailer passes on; and thirdly, there is the thrill of anticipation as you await the return of a seasonal favourite, such as asparagus again. As you may have noticed, I find it difficult not to put asparagus with everything come the end of April.

But there is an exception to every rule, and with me it is peas. I adore fresh peas with a passion; their lush sweetness is a real joy in the summer and yet, after cooking, they are

always a disappointment. There is rarely much sweetness remaining. After a little investigation I found out why it happens. It is because from the moment that you pick your fresh peas the natural sugars contained within begin to convert to starch.

By the time they have been packed and shipped to a greengrocer and sat on the shelf for a day or two, the sugars have all but gone.

Two solutions exist: for those lucky enough to grow their own, it really could not be any simpler. All you have to do is pick 'em, pod 'em and cook 'em. And then eat 'em. Those of us without a vege-

can, which although filtered, was not pasteurised. Ruddies, with its own rubber "bung", turned a generation of ale lovers on to the pregnant possibilities of "real" ale, thus ringing the death-knell of the Party Seven keg. The landlord-supplied plastic container of draught caught on briefly, before the prevailing reign of the American-style six-pack and widget began.

KATE STRONACH

HENRY HARRIS'S CHEAT OF THE WEEK



table garden must head for the freezer for a bag of tender garden peas. Normally fresh produce is always superior but peas are again an exception.

Because the producer takes all the

previously mentioned steps in quick succession, we have a product to hand vastly superior to the fresh version available in the shops.

Here is my favourite way of using them, in a perfect "spring is here" dinner. Battered lemon sole fillets with a pea and mint purée. You will need: 2 cups of frozen peas; 2tbsp unsalted butter; 3 sprigs fresh mint; 2tbsp crème fraiche; olive oil; 2 large lemon



sole fillets: juice of half a lemon.

Boil the peas in plenty of unsalted water until cooked, drain and transfer straight to a food processor and add the butter, mint and crème fraiche. Season well with salt and pepper; if the mixture is too thick, add some hot water. Meanwhile preheat the grill, brush the fish fillets with some of the olive oil and place under the grill for a couple of minutes until cooked.

Divide the purée on to two plates and top with fish. Finally, tip any cooking juices into a small bowl and add a little more olive oil together with the lemon juice, stir together and spoon this loose sauce over the fish.

• The author is head chef at Harvey Nichols' fifth-floor restaurant in Knightsbridge.

CHAMPAGNE
SUPER VALUE
Calais

The Times Cook

A week is a long time in the creative laboratory that is the cook's kitchen – but just what is eaten, when and why?

Sometimes I am asked what food writers eat at home. A week's menus will show the thinking behind my cooking, how I use mainly what is in season, how I utilise leftovers, and how I plan menus.

At some stage, almost all of my cooking finds its way into my writing. When I write cookery books, I write the recipes that I have cooked at home. I do not cook my way through the vegetable chapter, the pasta chapter, the fish chapter and so on.

If what I have cooked is not well received, I probably never cook it again – and I certainly never write about it. I was pleased to read that Marcella Hazan writes her cookery books in the same way.

A recent week was as representative as any. On Sunday, old friends came for a late Sunday lunch. The day before, I made a terrine of skate, smoked salmon and courgettes, and chocolate pots.

These two dishes meant that I would need to spend only minimal

time away from our guests at lunch. The main course was zampone with lentils and mashed potatoes. Good-tempered vegetables like these, once cooked, can be kept warm for half an hour or more on heat diffusers.

The zampone simmered in its foil bag until cooked, whereupon I drained and sliced it, and served it on a bed of lentils, with the potatoes served separately. Green salad and two excellent farmhouse cheddars, Montgomery and Keene's, followed. After the chocolate pots, made with dark chocolate and soya "cream", there was dessert of fruit, nuts and maroons glacés.

Monday's dinner started with an avocado and waxy potato salad, with walnuts and an orange and walnut vinaigrette. The main course has been a Monday-night fixture for many years: a pot-roasted chicken with vegetables, and, separately, basmati rice cooked in the oven.

Blueberries stirred into yoghurt followed. Of all the berry fruit, blueberries keep best. I bought four cartons on their sell-by-date for half-price and they kept for another week in the refrigerator.

Fennel, tomato and chicory made a crisp salad to start Tuesday's dinner. I followed it with a favourite pasta dish – spaghetti Genovese, with small waxy potatoes, green beans, and a pesto whizzed up from two packets of basil, a handful of pine nuts, a heel of Parmesan and some olive oil from Mani in Greece: green, fruity and delicious.

When I walked past Steele's, our local butcher in Hampstead, on Wednesday morning, I saw they had lamb shanks. Irresistible. I bought two and made a slow-cooked casserole with olives, white wine, carrots and onions. We started dinner with the last slice of the skate terrine.

On Thursday, I made the second of our vegetable-based meals, of which I usually make three or four a week. I found fresh okra at Brian Lay's, my local greengrocer. This I cut up, dipped in a thick cornmeal batter, and deep-fried in olive oil.

I made a vegetable gumbo with more okra, beans, courgettes, carrots, onions, fennel, small waxy potatoes and chilli, and served this with rice. The blueberries turned up again in a crumble, but before I put on the topping, I poached the berries in home-made sloe gin.

The *pièce de résistance* on Friday was a fillet cut from a huge Gulf red snapper that I saw in the window of Hampshire Seafoods. It was a fine piece of fish: dense, sweet, and, it has to be said, quite chewy. I cooked it in the oven with olive oil and fennel on a bed of fennel and red pepper. Monkfish, cod or halibut can be cooked the same way. With it, we drank chilled, fresh fino.

On Saturday, I made a vegetable lasagne, preceded by a green salad. Potatoes, spread with pesto, and leeks made up one layer, grilled aubergine, fennel and red pepper, the second. I used up the remaining raw vegetables to make a stunning vegetable juice, whizzing it all through the Magimix. The residue made an excellent vegetable stock used in Sunday's braised pork.

I used the leftover red snapper, blended to a cream in the food processor, to stuff some *pimientos del Piquillo*, a can of which I

bought in Spain. The main course was a knuckle of free-range pork, an inexpensive cut of meat, braised slowly with fino, aromatics and rice. I thinned down the cornmeal batter, added more flour, and made crepes to serve with the rest of the blueberries and sloe gin.

Skate, smoked salmon and courgette terrine Serves 8

4 sheets or teaspoons gelatine
600ml each good dry white wine and water
1 celery stalk, chopped
1 slice of fresh ginger (optional)
Piece of orange zest
2 bay leaves

Soak the gelatine by just covering it with cold water, taken from the measured amount. Simmer the aromatics and skate bones in the remaining liquid in a saucepan for 30 minutes. Strain them into a

wide, shallow pan. Carefully lower the fish into the simmering *courbouillon* and poach for about five minutes. Remove the fish carefully and drain it on a clean towel or kitchen paper.

Strain the cooking liquid and measure out just over 450ml into a jug. Stir in the softened gelatine until it has dissolved. Season the liquid to taste, bearing in mind that as it cools, the flavour will weaken. Remaining stock can be used for soup. Put to one side any large strips of smoked salmon, as these can form a layer in the terrine. Blend the rest with the cream cheese 150ml gelatine liquid.

Layer the fish, smoked salmon

cream and courgettes in a one-kilo terrine lined with cling film. Pour on as much of the remaining gelatine liquid as the terrine will hold. Cover and refrigerate until set. Turn out, slice and accompany with salad leaves and a vinaigrette, dill mayonnaise or spicy tomato and horseradish sauce.

Baked Gulf red snapper Serves 2 to 3

1 red pepper
1 onion, peeled and thinly sliced
1 fennel bulb, trimmed and sliced into thin wedges
2 to 3tbsp extra virgin olive oil
2 to 3tbsp fino
Thick piece of Gulf red snapper fillet, 400 to 500g
2tbsp black olives
Fresh mint or coriander
Salt
Pepper
½ lemon or orange
A few thin slices of chorizo or cured ham, shredded if desired

Peel the pepper, quarter it, discard the seeds and cut into strips. Put in a shallow ovenproof dish with the onion and fennel, add half the oil and wine, cover with foil and cook in the oven or on top of the stove until the vegetables are soft.

Season the fish with salt, pepper and the grated citrus zest and juice. Place it on top of the vegetables, first cutting it into serving pieces, if you wish. Add the rest of the olive oil and fino, the olives, and a tablespoon or two of chopped fresh

herbs. Cover with foil, and cook in the oven at 180C, gas mark 4, for about 30 minutes. Halfway through, add chorizo or ham.

Blueberry, sloe gin and almond crumble Serves 4

350g blueberries
100ml sloe gin
100g flour
75g butter
50g ground almonds
75g light muscovado sugar
40g flaked or chopped almonds

Simmer the blueberries in the sloe gin for a few minutes. Sweeten if

necessary, but the gin should be sweet enough. Spoon the fruit into individual ramekins. Rub the butter and flour together, stir in the ground almonds and sugar, keeping the mixture loose.

Spoon the crumble over the fruit, and scatter the almonds on top. Bake at 200 C, gas mark 6, for 15 minutes.

Serve hot or warm, with a custard or *crème anglaise* and a little more sloe gin. If you do not make your own, the Plymouth Gin company has started making a good sloe gin, as well as a companion damson gin.

© Frances Bissell 1998

NEXT WEEK: The perfect roast chicken



Frances Bissell

1 sprig of tarragon and thyme
Handful of parsley stalks
1tsp peppercorns
2tsp salt
1kg skate, carefully sliced from the bone
250g smoked salmon trimmings
200g light cream cheese or crème fraîche
4 courgettes, sliced lengthways and blanched until tender

Soak the gelatine by just covering it with cold water, taken from the measured amount. Simmer the aromatics and skate bones in the remaining liquid in a saucepan for 30 minutes. Strain them into a

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On Thursday, I made the second of our vegetable-based meals, of which I usually make three or four a week. I found fresh okra at Brian Lay's, my local greengrocer. This I cut up, dipped in a thick cornmeal batter, and deep-fried in olive oil.

I made a vegetable gumbo with more okra, beans, courgettes, carrots, onions, fennel, small waxy potatoes and chilli, and served this with rice. The blueberries turned up again in a crumble, but before I put on the topping, I poached the berries in home-made sloe gin.

The *pièce de résistance* on Friday was a fillet cut from a huge Gulf red snapper that I saw in the window of Hampshire Seafoods. It was a fine piece of fish: dense, sweet, and, it has to be said, quite chewy. I cooked it in the oven with olive oil and fennel on a bed of fennel and red pepper. Monkfish, cod or halibut can be cooked the same way. With it, we drank chilled, fresh fino.

On Saturday, I made a vegetable lasagne, preceded by a green salad. Potatoes, spread with pesto, and leeks made up one layer, grilled aubergine, fennel and red pepper, the second. I used up the remaining raw vegetables to make a stunning vegetable juice, whizzing it all through the Magimix. The residue made an excellent vegetable stock used in Sunday's braised pork.

I used the leftover red snapper, blended to a cream in the food processor, to stuff some *pimientos del Piquillo*, a can of which I

Sweet passions among rations

If Terry Major-Ball needed a treat, he had to improvise – and that meant filching milk from little brother John

I suppose it's hard to imagine a Prime Minister as a baby," says Terry Major-Ball as he recalls the food he ate during his Second World War childhood. "When John was a baby I used to pinch a little bit of his milk powder. The sweet ration was very small and often you couldn't get any. I discovered if you put three parts dry milk powder, one part cocoa and a little bit of fresh milk to wet it down you could make a thick paste. You could roll it out, cut it up and then air-dry it to make these little sweets. John never seemed to notice that a little bit of milk was gone," he laughs.

This ruse excepted, Terry Major-Ball is not nostalgic about his childhood diet. He sniffs at the notion that the spartan rationing was healthier than his modern equivalent. "That was what the Ministry of Food told us at the time. It was true in that you tended to eat more vegetables – but that was simply because there wasn't much meat about," he says.

Food at home didn't start auspiciously. His father joked

that when he married, his mother "was the only lady he knew that could burn water". Things did change for the better and his mother developed into what he calls "a great cook, who made good solid English meals. She was also a marvellous pastry chef and she used to make delicious cakes."

"She would make what we called maids of honour, which were little jam-filled cakes, usually topped with ground almonds which during the war were topped with ground rice." His mother's shepherd's pies were "a good way of making the meat go further and her soured herrings 'a bit like mullinop herrings, but spiced more'."

Another bygone snack he remembers was sheep's brains on toast.

"I don't suppose many people eat it now with the scares," he says. As both Mr Major-Ball's parents came from north of Watford, black pudding was a regular breakfast item. His father "always had a cooked breakfast, eggs and bacon or eggs and gammon. He had that virtually every morning".

But how was this produced with a war on? "The gentleman who lived next door kept pigs. We didn't object to having them in our back garden, as in return we would get some bacon when it was killed."

Another must for Major Senior was roast dinner on a Sunday. "I remember mother was always able to make a roast because we kept chickens and rabbits. As I recall, to keep chickens you had to give up part of your egg ration and then you were allowed a certain amount of chicken meal."

Although this provided a supply of fresh meat for roasting every Sunday there was still the problem of having to slaughter the animals. "We were all a bit soft with animals in our family, so no one would kill them or eat them. The man next door kept chickens as well, so we would eat his chickens and he would eat ours. That way nobody had to eat their own animals. He did all the slaughtering."

It was his father's habit of eating late at night that left the

HOME COOKING

greatest impression on Mr Major-Ball's later eating habits. "My father always had a cooked supper at about 10pm and I'd have something with

him. As a result, when I was first married I always used to do the same – until after 38 years of marriage my wife has got me down to a cup of tea and a sandwich."

JOE WARWICK

Eat our words.

If you love food, you'll relish Food Illustrated, the brand-new monthly magazine devoted to all things culinary. Among its pages you'll find fresh and innovative features, irresistible recipes and tips on entertaining, as well as articles on restaurants,

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New issue out now

Food Illustrated is published monthly by John Brown Publishing

CONSUMING INTERESTS: PRAWN COCKTAILS

A neighbouring column brings you the drinks that time forgot. Here you have the equivalent in food. Most retailers' idea of ready-made prawn cocktail is all too reminiscent of British catering before the invention of

The Good Food Guide. The sauces are simply frightful and the "serving suggestions" usually amount to no more than adding a salad leaf or two. Anyone want to join me in a Prawn Protection Society? ROBIN YOUNG



Safeway Prawn Cocktail, £1.99 for 200g. Claims: "Succulent North Atlantic prawns in a mayonnaise dressing." Verdict: The prawns were "pulverised beneath, not mixed in, the sauce. Fry the prawns in the sauce in reverse order, so the 1950s-redolent sauce could have been more of a dip and less of a barrier cream. ★★

St Michael Ready to Eat Prawn Cocktail, £1.99 for 200g. Claims: "Large, succulent prawns in a traditional cocktail dressing." The French ingredients list reveals that prawns form just 37 per cent of the recipe. Verdict: Ingredients include glucose syrup, spirit vinegar, modified starch and onion powder. The tender prawns retained some flavour, but were inundated in tasteless pale pink gloop. ★½

Tesco Prawn Cocktail, £1.99 for 200g. Claims: "Succulent prawns in a delicious cocktail sauce. Ready to eat." Verdict: There was much more mayonnaise, smelling like bottled salad cream and tasting of vinegar, than there were prawns in the tub. Fat content at 40.4 per cent was high, though only 3.3 per cent was saturates. ★

Asda Prawn Cocktail, £1.49 for 200g. Claims: "Ready to eat. Although every care has been taken to remove shell, some small pieces may remain." Verdict: The prawns seemed shell-free, but they were obliterated in vast amounts of a distasteful sauce (making the product 36.6 per cent fat). No star

Harrods Marie Rose Prawns, £3.99 for 100g. Claims: "Mediterranean

prawns in a sauce of cream, brandy, tomato ketchup, seasoning and dill." Verdict: In a class of their own. Four times the price of the nearest competitors, but more than four times as good. The delicious dill-flavoured sauce was good enough to be licked up to the last drop. Exceptional. ★★★★★

Sainsbury's Prawn Cocktail, £1.99 for 200g. Claims: "Now with 10 per cent extra prawns." Verdict: The overpowering effect of the brutally clumsy beige coloured sauce that obliterated all flavour from the tough-textured prawn corpses is easily explained when one sees that it is compounded with tomato ketchup, British mustard paste, lemon juice concentrate, anchovy paste, acetic acid and Tabasco sauce. No star

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MORE FOOD & DRINK

IN the times magazine

Jonathan Meades on L'Escargot, London, plus Blair's Cool Britannia



Terry Major-Ball: "We were soft on animals"



Young Terry and father

If today's copy of *The Times* is still called *The Times*, the Editor's life will not be worth living. I sent him a fax last Monday to suggest it might be a better idea to rename today's edition of the paper *David Bowker on Saturday*, and that, rather than waste time talking about themselves every week, the other columnists should each write 800 words about David Bowker and how he has enriched their lives.

My fax was originally intended to be a joke. But when I thought about it, my demands did not seem unreasonable. After all, who makes you buy *The Times* every Saturday? *C'est moi, naturellement*. But does the Editor show his appreciation with flowers, chocolates and "thank you" notes? Sadly not.

I experienced the same baffling lack of recognition on Tuesday. My local amateur dramatics society is rehearsing a production of the Scottish play. Because I only joined recently, I have not been given much to do. All the juiciest roles have gone to the society's longest serving members, which is why Lady Macbeth is 100 years old and Macbeth has to use an inhaler during the fight scenes.

I play various spear-carriers, voices off

Nothing to admit but my genius

SEVEN LONG DAYS

David Bowker accepts a challenge: this time, a week being a prima donna

and men in kilts. My only line of dialogue is: "The Queen, my Lord, is dead", which is Macbeth's cue to drone on about all our yesterdays lighting fools the way to dusty death.

Normally, I just say my line and exit. But tonight I tried to spice things up a bit. I stayed on stage until Macbeth said: "Out, out, brief candle", then walked over and gave him a pat on the back. Philip, the director, asked me what I thought I was doing.

I said: "I was improvising."

Philip went red in the face. "One does not improvise Shakespeare."

"I thought it needed livening up."

"Don't think just say your line and get off." I stood my ground: "I can't do that. Philip, I don't believe the messenger would be that callous. I've just told the King that his wife's dead. I think my character needs to show a bit more sympathy here."

Through clenched teeth, Philip said: "You haven't got a character. You've got

one line. Either play the scene as written, or I'll find someone else who can."

"Right," I retorted. "Find someone else. Because I refuse to be directed by an amateur any longer." With this, I stormed off. Admittedly, my walk-out would have been more effective if I had had somewhere to storm off to. Instead, I had to hang around for another two hours until the rehearsal ended because Macduff was giving me a lift home.

On Friday I had lunch with my literary agent. He was excited by a book that I



have written about myself called *On Being Truly Gifted*. After lunch, I went back to my agent's office and was puzzled to see that his bookshelves were crammed with books by other people. "What's all this rubbish?" I demanded.

My agent looked confused. "Books," he said. "By my other clients."

"I'm David Bowker," I reminded him.

"You don't need other clients."

"I'm afraid I do," he said. "What if nobody buys your work? How will I feed my wife and children?" I was disgusted.

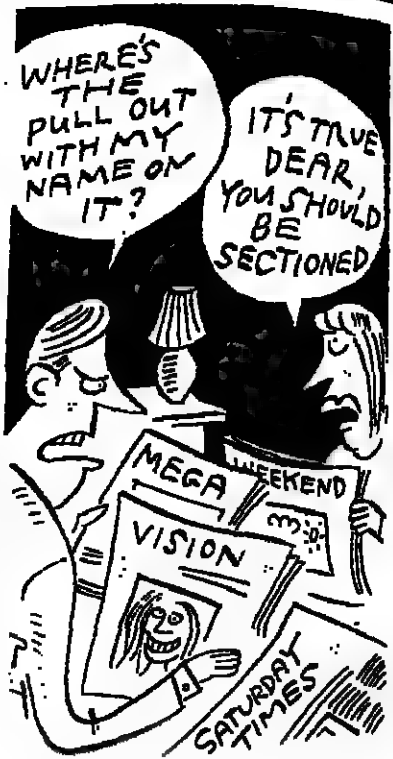
The man was virtually admitting that his own family took priority over my career. I fired him and stormed off.

On Saturday I went to see a Lord Lloyd-Webber musical. I sat in the front row because, for a person of my talent, only the best is good enough. My fellow theatre-goers recognised me from my photograph in *The Times* but coyly pretended not to know me.

However, as the final curtain fell, the audience gave me a standing ovation. I knew they were applauding me, because no one in their right mind would have applauded the fiasco on the stage.

I turned to face my public and bowed. Then I looked over my shoulder and saw the entire cast were bowing to me. I glanced up at the Royal Box and saw Lord Lloyd-Webber himself. He, too, was applauding — but not bowing. Probably thought he was too important to bow to a mere writer. Feeling betrayed, I made a scene and stormed off.

• Jane Skilling is away



Scientists hope to diagnose illnesses by using an electronic nose to analyse a patient's odour, Nigel Hawkes reports



The doctor says you don't smell healthy



Electronic nose machine developed at Warwick University

I've got it on the nose

Many people think it is pretentious to sniff wine. It is not. It is essential. The mistaken assumption that aroma and bouquet are for wine bores is all part of an underestimation of the power of the nose. Wine experts gather more information with their nostrils than they do with their taste-buds.

Indeed, so highly tuned is my own sense of smell that, after correctly identifying a wine from a glass, I can identify which of my assembled guests has drunk out of it. My sister Miranda and I used to enliven the dreary business of washing up after a dinner party by me sniffing out which glass was whose.

It is hard to say quite when I realised that my sense of smell was my *tour de force*. Certainly as a child my earliest memories are linked to smell. The scent of my mother's superb cooking, the heady scent of the iceberg climbing rose that I sat opposite while I read my first book aged four, the peculiarly green tomato fuf of the hothouse, where I could filch ripened tomatoes straight from the vine.

Looking back, I can see it was no coincidence that my mother always asked me to season her soups and to make the salad dressings and not my less organoleptically skilled brother or sister.

Most of us make little use of our noses. With survival no longer dependent on our ability to forage for food, smell has been demoted to the lowest division of our senses. However, the olfactory bulb, a peanut-sized part of the brain directly above the nose in the centre of the forehead, is capable of remarkable things. It is by receiving information, interpreting it and then passing it on to the cerebral cortex for further examination that we are capable of assessing the individual and collective orchestra of smells in, say, a greatly aged vintage red wine; and that we are capable of detecting as little as one part in a hundred million billion. Life can be so much more fun if we revel in our ability to smell.

Like other mothers I can tell you correctly, blindfolded, which child was wearing what

clothes by smell. Babies and most children tend to smell sweet and often milky until they reach puberty. And mothers with a heightened sense of smell soon learn that any change in this odour needs watching.

I remember my eldest daughter at the age of two and a half developing a weird, almost oniony smell that lingered for weeks with no obvious reason — until she came down with chicken pox, a childhood illness that can take three weeks to incubate. By the time our younger daughter was hatching it some years later, I had the smell mentally tagged and knew what we were in for. Any slight sour note emanating from our three children is always an accurate harbinger of illness ahead.

If you feel you have lost the art of smell, don't worry: the more you use it the more accurate it gets. Start on something like a ripe French cheese and compare it, blind, with a mild cheddar. To begin with you may not be able to smell the cheddar at all. But after a week or so its delicate flavour will be etched on your brain.

Along with many other mental skills, it is possible to have a genetic natural ability to smell well. I suspect that the DNA of tea-tasters, perfume "noses" and wine specialists may well show a similar genetic propensity to sniff with skill.

The perfume industry plays up the evocative aspect of scent. I can instantly recall the odour of my boarding-school cloakroom, a combination of linseed oil and Vaseline-laced lacrosse sticks, muddy boots and dirty coconut mats. A much happier smell memory is that of my mother leaning over my bed when I was a little girl to kiss me goodnight, all dressed up to go out with my father and wearing a perfume called *Rêve d'Or*, discontinued in the 1950s.

Years later I was helping my parents move house and my mother had discovered a forgotten bottle. I had not smelt it for years — but I recognised it immediately.

JANE MACQUITTY
The Times wine correspondent

Breath contains more than 400 organic chemicals produced by the body. They find their way into the breath in just the same way as alcohol, through a fine tissue called the pulmonary alveolar membrane which separates the air in the lungs from the blood circulating through the blood vessels. The ability of chemicals to cross this barrier makes possible the accuracy of the dreaded Breathalyzer.

Not even the most dedicated human sniffer could detect more than a fraction of these chemicals, though a dog might do better. The answer lies in an electronic nose, trained to detect the chemicals characteristic of a particular disease, or to provide far more rapid identification of an infectious agent such as a bacterium.

At Warwick University, an electronic nose originally developed to detect off-odours in beer is proving a handy diagnostician. It has already shown it can identify ketosis, a cattle disease, from the raised levels of ketones in the cows' breath. In tests reported in *Measurement Science and Technology*, Dr Julian Gardner of Warwick and colleagues showed that it can identify the bacterium *Staphylococcus aureus* 100 per cent of the time, and *E. coli* 92 per cent of the time.

He envisages it as a quicker, easier method for identifying common pathogens in swabs taken from the ear, nose, throat or other parts of the body. "At present these have to be sent to a laboratory, grown in culture, then stained and classified," he said. "It can take one to two weeks. We should be able to do the same job in one to two hours."

And the technology is close at hand. Already there are three British companies selling electronic noses, developed either at Warwick or at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology. Between 200 and 300 machines are sold every year.

Dr Gardner said, with the food and drink industry being the biggest customer. Electronic noses use an array of polymer-based sensors, whose electrical resistance changes when they detect a particular chemical. They are "trained" using a neural net, a computer based loosely on the architecture of the human brain. Within a few years, Dr Gardner expects the noses to

be able to detect from half a dozen to a dozen common pathogens, and to distinguish between bacterial and fungal infections. He also expects them to be on sale at a price that a GP's surgery could afford — say £1,000.

Diagnosing disease from a patient's breath might be trickier, he admitted. "We succeeded with the cows because they have a very predictable diet," he said. "But with a patient who had been drinking, or eating curries, it would obviously be harder. It might work better in a hospital, where diet can be controlled."

In Inverness, Dr George Dodd, a former head of the Warwick unit, hopes to use an electronic nose to diagnose schizophrenia, building on work by Dr Ian Glen and colleagues in the

Highland Psychiatric Research Group who have shown success with a skin test for the disease. The assumption is that schizophrenia is caused by abnormal fatty acids in the membranes surrounding the brain cells. The group, backed by Scotia Pharmaceuticals, has shown that schizophrenics are deficient in two fatty acids — arachidonic and docosahexaenoic. If they are missing, said Dr Glen, they must have gone somewhere, and it is a reasonable bet that they were being oxidised and going into the breath. If so, they ought in theory to be detectable as breakdown products.

Some years ago, Professor Michael Phillips of New York Medical College used chemical analysis to show that the breath of schizophrenics contains significantly higher levels of pentane and carbon disulphide than controls. He examined breath samples from 25 schizophrenics, 26 people with other mental illnesses and 38 normal people. He found he could successfully distinguish 20 out of the 25 schizophrenics by this test alone. "To my great surprise, there is a reasonable separation between people with schizophrenia and those without," he said.

Professor Phillips believes that one day people will go for "breathograms" to screen them for illnesses ranging from cancer to gastric ulcers. Dr Gardner says that diagnosing a cancer through the breath may be over-ambitious, but monitoring its progress during treatment might be possible quite soon.



Diabetics are said to have the scent of old apples, a fact that has aroused the interest of doctors

FACTS AND FIGURES

■ The creature with the most acute sense of smell is the emperor moth. It can detect a virgin female at 6.8 miles (11km). There is also evidence to suggest that the polar bear can detect seals from 40 miles (64km) away and has the most highly developed sense of smell of the bear family. Dogs have 290 million more smelling cells than humans.

■ Top turn-on smells for

women: liquorice, cucumber, baby powder. A survey in Chicago last year concluded that the smell of liquorice increased blood flow to sexual areas by 14 per cent (10 per cent is considered "significant arousal").

■ Top turn-on smells for men: lavender, vanilla, strawberry, oriental spice.

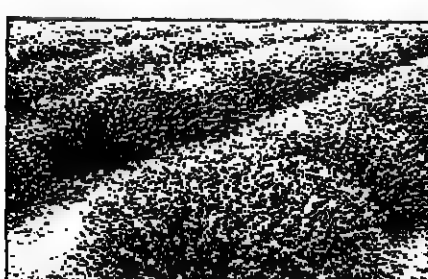
■ A woman's sense of smell is better than a man's.

■ Smells can help you remember events from more than 50 years ago. This is because smell is controlled by a primitive section of the brain and produces a much stronger recall than photographs.

■ Nerve cells inside the nose are capable of detecting more than 10,000 chemical smells.

DEBORAH KING

TURN ONS FOR MEN



Lavender

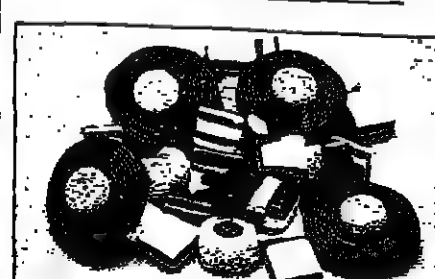


Strawberries

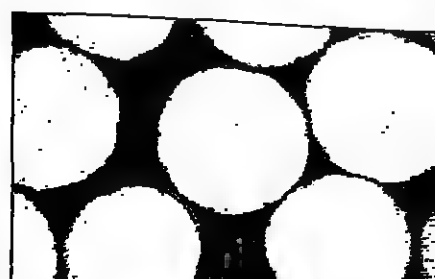


Oriental spice

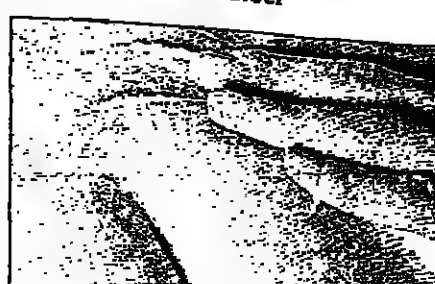
TURN ONS FOR WOMEN



Liquorice



Cucumber



Baby powder

Go native and bring back life to your garden

here to

Go native and bring back life to your garden

British plants will attract creatures and ensure your garden thrives, says Stephen Anderton

It is too easy to think that committed eco-gardeners belong to the old-tyres-and-carpet school of gardening. How refreshing it was, then, to go recently to a lecture by Flora for Fauna, the charity run by the Duchess of Hamilton, which seeks to push us gardeners into growing more native plants.

Lyres were never mentioned. Carpets didn't figure at all. Instead, we were treated to a preview of a grand, sophisticated, classical pavilion 20ft tall, which is to be the focus of Christie's Chelsea Show garden this year. The tower has been designed by George Carter to be an Empire State of wildlife, and a potential home to dozens of species.

Every ledge, aperture, overhang and underhang is designed to welcome something. Lattice walls and internal radial strutwork offer maximum opportunities for nesting.

In the octagonal gazebo which forms the base of the tower, there are nest boxes everywhere, in and out, to attract the likes of pied wagtails, spotted flycatchers and swallows.

On the middle deck, tree sparrows are expected — a species whose numbers have fallen by 94 per cent in the past 25 years.

Up in the top deck, there will be suitable nesting places for martins and swifts, and a roost for pipistrelle bats.

Houses are generally too well made nowadays for bats to get in and make a home, but this tower will be tailor-made for both kinds of pipistrelles.

It is a clever building. The principle it proposes, that a sophisticated garden feature can also be an efficient haven for wildlife, is one which deserves to be applied more widely to all garden buildings.

But why bother? Aren't bird freaks just as single-minded, about their own agenda as gardeners are about gardening? Do we really want to grow native plants in gardens just for the sake of the wildlife?

Flora for Fauna's answer is straightforward. It does not wish to ban non-native or highly-bred plants. But it wants us to use as many natives as we can. Every native flower or tree helps in the larger conservation picture.

Gardens have a major role to play in conservation. They cover more than a million acres in Britain today. According to Chris Mead, director of the British Trust for Ornithology, gardens are now a vital sanctuary for wildlife. In contrast to the green desert of monocultures that is the modern agricultural landscape.

The practical value of growing natives in gardens is twofold. From a gardener's point of view, having some native trees or shrubs makes a garden look as if it belongs to its local area, and stops it looking like an off-the-peg garden centre display. More

NATIVE PLANTS

Native plants especially useful to wildlife: Trees: oak, hornbeam, small-leaved lime, birch, goat willow, grey willow, hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn, box, yew. Shrubs: guelder rose, wayfaring tree, spindle, dogwood, dog rose, ivy, old man's beard. Herbaceous plants: teasie, yellow flag iris, oxeye daisy, cow parsley, nettle, foxglove, purple loosestrife, red campion, soapwort, columbine, musk mallow, cornflower, scabious, marjoram, common violet, primrose, cowslip, wild strawberry, male and lady ferns.

Numbers of insect species associated with native trees: oak 284, willow 266, birch 229, hawthorn 140, blackthorn 109. Scots pine 91, alder 90, elm 82, hazel 73, beech 64, ash 41, lime 31.

Native plants suitable to your area: there is now a database of plants native to your area according to post code on the Internet (<http://florain.ac.uk/ffr/>). The Forde House Database is a joint venture between Flora for Fauna, the Natural History Museum and the Royal Mail.

Boxes for birds, bats, insects, hedgehogs etc: a wide range of high-quality "woodcrete" nest boxes is available from Jacob Jayne & Co, Canterbury, Kent CT3 4LW. Freefone 0800 072 0130 for details.

Flora for Fauna, The Linnean Society of London, Burlington House, Piccadilly W1V 6LQ (0171-351 4266)

importantly, native species support native flora in a more efficient way than exotic introductions. They have grown up together for thousands of years. No holly, no holly blue butterfly; no honeysuckle, no white admiral; no hops or nettles, no comma butterfly.

When this kind of interaction works, there is sufficient of the right food, at the right time, to keep every species going. The right flower feeds the right insects which feed the right birds and bats. If birds, which are near the top of the food chain, are doing well, then the chances are that so is everything else lower down.

Of course nature is cruel. There has to be excess of one species for another to eat. But in the long run a balance is struck. How difficult it is to get a conservationist to call any creature bad. Chris Mead, for instance, admits that magpies have increased by three times in the past 20 years, and that they are serial killers of small birds and fledglings: "But only in May, when they are

feeding their own young." He recommends locking a shed window open, so birds can nest inside where magpies will not feel safe. At worst, nests can be given a large-gauge wire netting cage.

Mr Mead regards the planting of natives as vital to the health of gardens generally, since even beneficial insects, useful to gardeners, are part of the food chain.

If a non-native "London" plane supports almost no native insect life in Britain, but a common oak can support 284 insect species, doesn't it make sense to plant a high percentage of oak? Even the hawthorn supports more than 149 insect species. And insects are what birds need.

Almost all birds rely on the protein provided by insects to rear viable offspring. Haven't we all said to some child, "Oh, all right, leave your cabbage, leave your rice, but you've got to eat the meat. Or there's no



The Duchess of Hamilton with a model of the Chelsea Flower Show exhibit

pudding." In a fledgling's case it's life, not pudding, that is at stake when protein fails.

Next time you wage the battle of the bolognese, think about squeezing a few natives into the garden. Help to tip the balance. It is heartening to see how many natives are really good garden plants already.

EXEBURY is a byword for azaleas and rhododendrons, and May is one of the most popular times to visit. The garden was begun by Lionel de Rothschild in 1919 and his expert work is continued today by Edmund de Rothschild who regularly exhibits at the RHS. The 200 acres are irrigated by a couple of natural springs and 20 miles of specialist piping which keep the 10,227 trees and shrubs in good condition despite our increasingly unpredictable climate.

made Brodick and Tregothman gardens) have replanted one area with beeches and the rest of the garden has a collection of unusual trees and shrubs.

These are shown off to their best in High Beeches' spectacular setting: a great sweeping slope of small valleys and streams and a series of ponds. It is ten years since the garden was opened to the public, but it is making a name for itself partly because of the fine collection of rhododendrons and azaleas, many of them planted by the Loder family who owned High

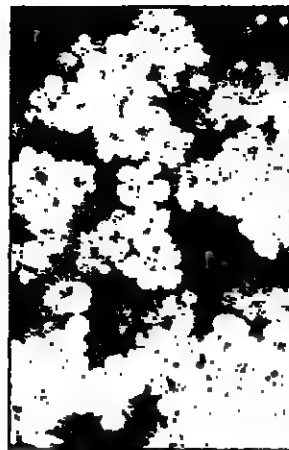
Beeches before the Boscauwens and was responsible for the renowned rhododendron garden in the area, Leonardlee. There is a tree trail with a huge variety of oaks and rare trees, including *Quercus oxycodon* and a *Stewartia rostrata*. The garden holds the national collection of *stewartia* trees.

Exbury Gardens, Southampton (01703 899422) Open every day until October 10-5.30. For prices, which vary, and further information please telephone.

JANE OWEN



Foxglove



Hawthorn



Mixed double cornflower



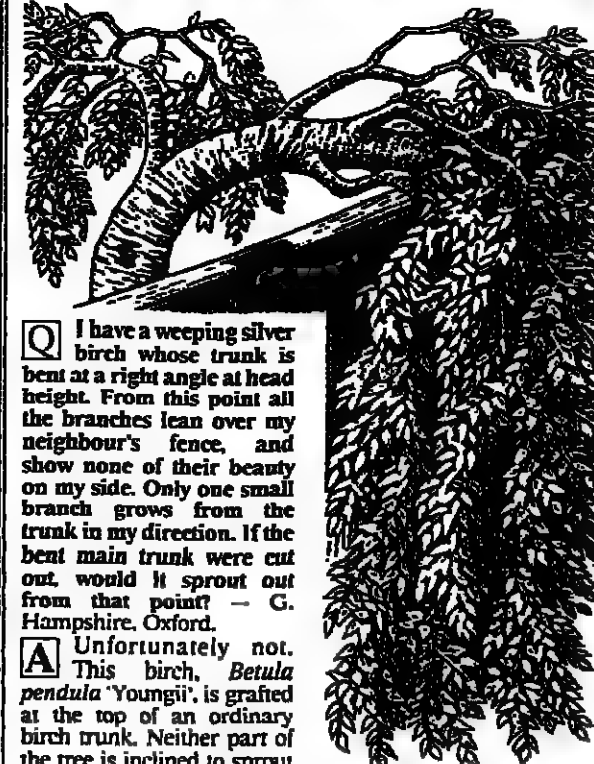
Common cornflower



Red campion

STEPHEN ANDERTON'S GARDEN ANSWERS

RICHARD ALLEN



Q I have a weeping silver birch whose trunk is bent at a right angle at head height. From this point all the branches lean over my neighbour's fence, and show none of their beauty on my side. Only one small branch grows from the trunk in my direction. If the bent main trunk were cut out, would it sprout out from that point? — G. Hampshire, Oxford.

A Unfortunately not. This birch, *Betula pendula* 'Youngii', is grafted at the top of an ordinary birch trunk. Neither part of the tree is inclined to sprout out from heavy pruning. It should have been planted with its best face towards you in the first place, or the errant branches nipped back when young to encourage the energy of the plant into the branch on your side.

There is not much you can do about it now. Birch roots are greedy and shallow too: it would not be easy to compromise by putting a clematis or rose into it. So the best advice is to live with it or scrap it.

Q Our 18-year-old weeping birch has grown out over a path and needs clipping back from time to time. This year for the first time every twig which has been cut continues to "weep". Apart from inviting children in to see transpiration at work, is there anything I should do to prevent this? Will the tree suffer? Is this why it is called a "weeping" birch? — R.A. Palmer, Pickering, North Yorkshire.

A The sap always rises early in birches, and in mild spells in mild springs it can rise even earlier. Sizeable late cuts will then bleed sap, not water, which weakens the tree and can result in the branch dying back. Transpiration, by the way, is breathing through the leaves: this is just bleeding. The moral is to cut earlier in the spring, or in late winter. The birch is said to weep, of course, because it hangs its branches down.

The best forms of the silver birch *Betula pendula* weep naturally and gracefully. More formal in its weeping habit is the form 'Tristis' which still makes a very large tree. The form 'Youngii' is the one usually found in domestic gardens, and it makes a small, flat-topped tree, weeping congestedly rather than gracefully. Henry Mason of Southampton has written to tell me of hornbeams pruned this year in January, whose sap, bleeding from wounds less than two inches across, produced icicles 3in long. I

saw icicles 18in long on bleeding sycamores in Clapham a few years ago. Bleeding of this kind is not stopped by painting the wound. It is like trying to mend a hole in a hose pipe with emulsion paint.

Q Last autumn I put 20 *Irish reticulata* 'Cantab' in containers and they have flowered successfully. I did the same thing a few years ago and they never flowered again after the first year. Should I lift the bulbs and store them, and then replant next autumn? — H. Cobb, Worcester.

A The little spring-flowing bulbous irises like purple *Irish reticulata*, its blue form 'Cantab', and the yellow *Irish danfordiae*, all tend to break up into lots of little bulbils after flowering. It can take years for them to build up to flowering again. In pots and containers the long, floppy, narrow leaves tend to fall over and snap long before they have properly fed the bulbs.

The answer is to plant the bulbs deeply, as much as 6in down. This seems to stop them breaking up, but on heavier soils it can also make them rot. When planting containers, it is best to regard them as a one-off flower, and simply plant new bulbs each year. They are cheap enough.

Write to Garden Answers, Weekend, The Times, 1 Pennington St, London E1 6UN. Advice is offered without legal responsibility. Enclosures cannot be returned.



Where to enjoy a blaze of glory

GARDENS TO VISIT

Stourhead, Stourton, Wiltshire (01747 840904) Three miles northwest of Mere. Open daily 10am-7pm. £4.40. THE rhododendrons which now blaze in spring were not part of the 19th-century plan by Henry Hoare and some would say that they get in the way of the purity of the original design, but they are popular with visitors.

The 40 acres centre on a lake created by damming the river Stour and so making what must be one of the most photographed landscapes in Britain. There is a large grotto with a bubbling spring and a hirsute river god beside one of the pools: a Temple of Apollo; a Temple of Flora; a Pantheon with sculptures inside and a stone bridge.

In autumn there is the fire of Japanese maples and in the rest of the year plenty of good trees — Wellingtonias, thujas, tulip trees, a handkerchief tree and Himalayan whitebeam — some of which were brought in by Richard Colt Hoare whose grandfather began the Stourhead landscape after his Grand Tour.

NICK MEERS/NATIONAL TRUST



Looking across the lake at Stourhead towards the Pantheon. The 40-acre garden is one of the most photographed landscapes in Britain

High Beeches, Handcross, West Sussex (01444 400599) One mile east of the A23 at Handcross. Open until June 30, 1-5pm. Closed Wednesdays. Open Monday, April 13, 10.30am-5pm for a daffodil day in aid of Marie Curie cancer care. For further opening times throughout the year please ring number above. Price £3.50, children under-14 free. THE first thing to say about High Beeches is that there aren't any — they blew down in the 1987 storm. But the Boscauwens (whose family

made Brodick and Tregothman gardens) have replanted one area with beeches and the rest of the garden has a collection of unusual trees and shrubs.

These are shown off to their best in High Beeches' spectacular setting: a great sweeping slope of small valleys and streams and a series of ponds. It is ten years since the garden was opened to the public, but it is making a name for itself partly because of the fine collection of rhododendrons and azaleas, many of them planted by the Loder family who owned High

Beeches before the Boscauwens and was responsible for the renowned rhododendron garden in the area, Leonardlee. There is a tree trail with a huge variety of oaks and rare trees, including *Quercus oxycodon* and a *Stewartia rostrata*. The garden holds the national collection of *stewartia* trees.

Exbury Gardens, Southampton (01703 899422) Open every day until October 10-5.30. For prices, which vary, and further information please telephone.

JANE OWEN



Plant runner beans in 3in pots of general-purpose compost under glass, for planting out next month. The stringless variety Galaxy, from Unwins, is said to be an especially reliable cropper, even in dry or cold years.

Watch for mice in greenhouses. They will quickly take beans and sweet peas.

Sow outdoors, in rows where they are to grow, peas, broad beans, cauliflowers, brussels sprouts, onions, turnips, beetroot and parsnips. Leeks can be sown in a short nursery row (or pot), for planting out deeply in rows later on.

Cut down to within a few inches of the ground the old stems of hardy fuchsias such as *Fuchsia magellanica*, and its varieties var. *molinae* (Alba), 'Tricolor' and 'Riccartonii'. Feed well, and in dry areas give a generous mulch of old compost or manure.

Sow hardy annuals such as calendula, nasturtium, lavatera and cornflowers in shallow drills or patches where they are intended to flower. They are reliable and fast to germinate, and a good choice with which to interest children in growing flowers. Studies at Cambridge University Botanic Garden have shown that single varieties usually offer more nectar to insects, and that doubles are not surprisingly often totally inaccessible to insects.

Cut back last year's stems of *Hydrangea paniculata* to two pairs of strong buds. The upper pair will produce this year's shoots, ending in creamy panicles of flowers. The lower pair may also shoot, but later; they are an insurance against late frosts.

Plant onion sets, 6in apart each way, and pushed into the soil until just the tip shows.

To call his radio programme 'Bruno at the Mill House', Bruno Brookes had to find a home to match, writes Jane Owen



One of the terracotta figures "which may be worth a lot of money" stands sentinel on the river (left). Bruno Brookes, former Radio 1 DJ, poses on the forsythia walk in his mill house garden which he potters around at weekends

Just milling about on the airwaves

Bruno Brookes is the former Radio 1 DJ who was a boyfriend of Anthea Turner. Now he runs a media company and broadcasts live from his mill house set in 20 acres of Berkshire garden.

Brookes is wearing a perfectly ironed, silky red shirt and yellow trousers. The suggestion that we go into the garden seems to alarm him. "You want to do the interview in the garden? I'll have to put my boots on," he says. "It isn't too muddy," I say, having spent a while wandering around his garden while he chatted to his media school students. "Yes it is," he says, looking at my boots.

We agree to do the interview in the kitchen where there is no carpet to ruin and where part of the garden is visible through large picture windows.

The garden runs on either side of the Kennet, a few rods from the fish farm which was recently almost wiped out by an unknown pollutant. Brookes's part of the Kennet, which criss-crosses his property, is unaffected. Weeping willows tickle the river's surface and there are eucalyptus, beech and an orchard of plums, pears, damsons and apples.

Two narrow streams branch off from the Kennet at the back of the

house, creating a small island which has been made into a brick terrace between the house and the informal, meadow-like garden.

On the island there are white concrete tables and a barbecue on wheels. Pinks dot the narrow bed along the mill-stream, with ivy, periwinkle and daffs and, on the opposite bank, knobs of pink bergenia give a little colour. Concrete window boxes planted with dwarf conifers guard one of the terraces between the house and river.

Modest humpback bridges link the house to the island terrace. At the end of one of the bridges stands a wrought iron gate with stylised leaves curling up from a pot.

Beyond the wrought iron gate is a forsythia walk which ends in a grassed area. This was covered with brambles and weeds until a year ago when Brookes started to mow much more regularly. A wooden stage has been built in the



A keen fly fisherman, Brookes runs a fishing programme from home (left) and his grandfather, Schooner, helps in the garden

ME AND MY GARDEN: BRUNO BROOKES

grassy area. It is there to elevate visiting rock bands. No garden should be without one.

Blood-red fingers of dogwood surround a large pond where moorhens, ducks and geese potter, while a pair of swans graze on the meadow. Beyond is a paddock with two mares (Mrs Brookes is into dressage) and then the land goes into a bosky area of mossy logs,

ferns and a sleeper bridge over the fast-running river.

Near the house two full-size terracotta female figures that look as if they have danced straight out of the *Ramayana* have been placed on either side of the river. These were left by the last owner, a dealer in such things, and Brookes says he knows little about them except that they may be worth a lot of money. A

third exotic-looking statue was taken by a previous owner to one of the big auction houses which took one look at it and said it must be stolen from India. Brookes intends to contact the Indian High Commission about it when he has the time.

Since his departure from Radio 1 three years ago — no one knows if he was pushed or if he walked —

Brookes has been busy. He owns an independent radio and television company which supplies shows to stations around the country, and he has a broadcasting school which runs two-day courses.

"It is amazing that we have grown as we have when we are out here in Hungerford and nowhere near London. I'm the sort of person who gets bored just presenting radio shows. I am an opportunist. My long-term objective is to build a brand. We also do corporate events, team building, information and education."

"At Radio 1, I was involved in five or six radio shows a week and displaying myself on stage after a few Bacardis. I took six months off because I was so knackered. I'd always wanted to move to the country for the quality of life."

Not any old bucolic spot, though. Brookes had already decided on the

name of the show he wanted to broadcast and that limited his house hunt. "Because I wanted to call the show 'Bruno at the Mill House' I wanted to find a mill house. I tried to buy a mill house five miles upstream but the sale fell through a month before I was due on air. The mill house gives me lots of different things to talk about."

However, the prospect of having to maintain the garden almost put Brookes off buying the mill house. He has since come round. "It is a hobby for me at weekends. It is my way of keeping fit. In the summer there's a hell of a lot to do," he says. He reckons he is a changed man — from an over-worked, over-travelled performer to one who stars, performs and earns from picturesque water meadows in Berkshire.

He has become a keen fly fisherman and even runs a fishing programme from his back door. The tanning qualities of his country surroundings affect all visitors, he says.

"Rock stars come down here and you culturally change them in the space of an hour by putting a fishing rod in their hands, even though they were on stage at Wembley the night before."

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CHANGING TIMES

We really like it here, mum

Sue Corbett picks the best child-friendly gardens — from Easter egg hunts to giant chessboards



A child plays with a giant chess set at Burton Agnes Hall, North Yorkshire

As many parents know to their cost, William Brown and Violet Elizabeth Bott are alive and well and causing havoc in a garden near you — which is something for the childless to bear in mind if they invite young nephews and nieces to visit for the Easter weekend.

The scale of the problem is evident when you talk to the head gardener of a lush and exotically stocked public garden in the West Country. Ask him about his child visitors and he says he hopes he and his garden can remain anonymous because "the last thing we want is to be seen as a child-friendly garden". He happily takes school parties round the garden, and he's only too pleased if parents go round with their children.

But the children he fears are the ones who, the minute the family comes in, start picking the flowers near the entrance and follow this up by sprinting off in the opposite direction from their parents.

Problem children clearly do not trouble the National Trust's gardeners over-much. Maybe it's because families who join the Trust together stay together (on the way round the gardens at least), or it could be that the Trust's entrance fees ensure that parents looking for a place for children to let off steam simply go to the park.

Perhaps the adventure playgrounds in 14 of the Trust's properties, from Lanhydrock in Cornwall, to Benningborough Hall in North Yorkshire, have something to do with it too.

The Trust is stepping up its nurturing of the young visitor by introducing a new "child" category of membership (£14 a year) for children under 12. Easter egg trails are a

popular way for children to familiarise themselves with National Trust gardens. At Erdig, near Wrexham, the Easter egg trail winds its way around the garden from Good Friday until Easter Monday, noon until 4pm.

At Treebah Garden, Mawnan Smith, Falmouth, Cornwall (01326 250448), there will be Easter egg trails with prizes, daily, from Maundy Thursday until April 26. This is in addition to the regular Treebah trail, with its Tarzan's Camp and aerial slide, which sends children scurrying around the garden looking for camellias, bamboo, gunnera and tree ferns in pursuit of a small reward.

Easter egg trails are a good way of introducing children to the garden

place at Treebah in half-term week, October 26-30. A jungle garden features among the eight acres at Burton Agnes Hall, Driffield, North Yorkshire (01262 490324). There are also snakes in the unusual form of a giant game of Snakes and Ladders, which, together with a giant chessboard and a

maze, keeps young visitors occupied for long periods.

Other Trust events this year include children's garden tours at Anglesey Abbey in Cambridgeshire on Thursday, May 28, and Saturday, October 17.

At Montacute House, in Somerset, there will be a guided tour of the garden for children on June 25. "A Walk Around the Borders" follows on Sunday, September 20, and "Autumn Colours Park and Garden" on Sunday, November 8, both led by the head gardener.

A garden tour for children takes place at the Trust's Lacock Abbey near Chippenham, Wiltshire, on Wednesday, April 8 and May 13 at

11am, and throughout the year Blue Peter badgeholders have free entry to the Abbey and museum.

"Garden Reflection" is an event for children at Fountains Abbey, Ripon, North Yorkshire, on Sunday, May 3, 11am to 6pm. At the Trust's Claremont Landscape Garden, Portsmouth Road, Esher, Surrey, there will be children's activities every Thursday in August, 11am to 1pm.

Gardens of interest to children include Mary Wondrausch's Cornish, Surrey (01483 41400), open under the NGS on Sunday, June 28; Friars Court and Clarendon Court, Oxfordshire (01367 810206), open under the NGS on Sunday afternoons, June 7 and August 23; have working displays on alternative energy and Stanley House Farm, Milwich, Staffordshire (01889 502306), open under the NGS on Sunday afternoons, May 24 and June 21; has a Laburnum Tunnel, ponds and teas organised by the local branch of the NSPCC.

See also the RHS Gardeners' Yearbook 1998, which lists gardens of interest to children (Dorling Kindersley, £9.99). Child-friendly gardens are listed in the Trust's free Children's Welcome Information Pack (0181-315 1111).

● Worms, Wellies and Windowboxes: Instant Gardening: an RHS Children's pack by Sue Phillips, published by Henderson at £3.99.
 ● Take advice on poisonous plants and other dangers such as ponds from the Child Accident Prevention Trust's Garden Safety leaflet. Send on to the Trust at Clerks Court, 18-20 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU (0171-608 3828).

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Fishy business in the garden

Christine Webb reports on the growing waiting list of buyers for properties with fishing rights

The pop star Gary Barlow hit the headlines last month when he secured his privacy by barring an angling club from fishing a lake on his 60-acre estate at Delamere Manor, Nantwich, Cheshire.

At least it was the former Take That singer's prerogative to ban the fishermen from his £1 million property, as he owned the fishing rights. Other homeowners with an apparently peaceful river at the end of the garden have learnt the hard way that "fishing rights not included" usually means someone else owns them and the someone else has a perfect right to pace up and down the river bank brandishing a fishing rod.

Such a fate is said to have befallen Sting, another pop idol, whose Lake House, near Amesbury, Wiltshire, came with 54 acres and 315 yards of single-bank fish-



Kingsmere, above, belonging to Dr Hugo Hammersley, right, is on the banks of the River Itchen near Winchester

ing on the River Avon. As agent Lane Fox's brochure clearly stated, the remaining fishing, about 1,000 yards of river bank, was let on a 15-year lease to the Piscatorial Society. Sting is said to have been misled that members had free access to fish in the property he coveted as a private retreat.

Owners of less grand abodes may feel even more aggrieved when a Barbour-clad fisherman crops up beyond the dahlias in the garden only yards from their patio, yet they cannot rightfully shoo him off. Such a scenario happened recently south of Stockbridge, Hampshire, and involved the Houghton Club — one of the most exclusive fishing clubs in the world.

The Houghton, which has 22 members, owns the fishing rights to miles of the most famous trout stream in England, the River Test — including about 200 yards at Houghton which clip the end of seven gardens belonging to private houses and bordering land belonging to The Boot pub.

This stretch is included in a 500-yard parcel of fishing rights that was put on the market at about £250,000. The club is rumoured to have accepted a much lower offer from a buyer who is giving the homeowners the chance to buy the fishing rights at the bottom of their gardens. Robin Lalonde, of the James Harris estate agency in Winchester, is handling the sale but declined to talk to us about a

deal which the club wanted to keep quiet.

Not all the householders are buying the rights. But those who do can expect to gain from the purchase if they sell their property. Doing away with the anglers' right of access would add about 10 per cent to their homes' value — and owning a reasonable stretch of fishing adds even more.

Graham Waterton, of Strutt & Parker's Salisbury office, says: "Last summer I had a client who owned two miles of fishing rights on one of the chalk streams but not the land. He bought the land and by putting the fishing rights with it he enhanced the value of the land and rights together by 20 to 30 per cent."

He says friction could arise over fishermen's access when fishing rights are sold separately by a landowner who then sells the land to someone else. "Riparian rights is the ownership of the river and everything that goes on it and the river bed — often to halfway across it because rivers were frequently boundaries. Fishing is in such demand that you can let the fishing rights without giving up the riparian rights."

The rights are a good investment during prosperous times, especially on the best chalk streams such as the rivers Test, Itchen and Avon. Jonathan Durrant, chairman of the



Hampshire River Keepers' Association, launched Timsbury Fisheries in 1995, a company which owns more than three miles of fishing on the Test river system. There are 112 shares owned by 76 fishermen — each share entitles its owner to fish one rod once a fortnight in season. The company's shares have doubled in two years from £7,000 to £14,000 each.

"It enables people to fish, having all the benefits of being on water and none of the disadvantages because the responsibility and costs are shared between them all," Mr Durrant says.

The best fly-fishing in Hampshire is valued by the yard, according to William Sleeman, of Cluttons

Daniel Smith's branch in Romsey, Hampshire. "We have a few buyers waiting for fishing rights to come up. Good fishing costs £300 to £400 a yard, the less good £100," he says.

A job move is forcing Hugo and Maggie Hammersley, both doctors, to sell their Edwardian home on the banks of the River Itchen which skirts a willow-fringed island that also belongs to them.

"We and our neighbours spent a lot making sure there's a good flow of water here, and the trout have returned in force," says Hugo Hammersley. "I even saw a salmon last year."

"I don't do much fishing, but we've had a kingfisher nesting in the river bank and a pair of grebes.

We and our three children will miss picnicking on the island, the boating, and sitting by the river on a summer's evening watching the trout rise." Kingsmere, their seven-bedroom house in Shawford, near Winchester, is being marketed by Hamptons (01962 842030) at £550,000.

Prime trout fishing can cost £300 a day. But the thrills of fly-fishing in spring are available on less exclusive rivers. A new house backing on to the River Ouse, near York, has been built in traditional style by Crosby Homes at Fox Garth, Nether Poppleton. The £430,000 house has large riverside gardens with fishing and mooring rights (01904 787714).

SMART MOVES



ACTRESS, scriptwriter and romantic novelist Jean Marsh (above) is selling her Thames Reach Tower flat and moving to a cottage in the country. The 63-year-old author of *Upstairs Downstairs* and *House of Elliot* has put her first-floor flat in Fulham, west London, on the market for £405,000 and has moved to a converted labourer's cottage near Hungerford in Berkshire. Her new home is in complete contrast to the modernist Richard Rogers-designed flat overlooking the Thames, which she is leaving.

THE six-bedroom former home of the 19th-century pianist Edward Daurer in Ormeau Square, London W2, is on sale for £1.3 million through agents Chestertons. The pianist entertained Richard Wagner on his visit to London in 1877.



FORMER Radio 4 presenter Chris Searle (above) is selling his Georgian home in the Franchay area of Bristol for £435,000 in order to move closer to his children's school. His new home, a Victorian semi, cost more than £600,000 and is next to Clifton College which his sons Harry, 14, and Jack, 11, attend.

RACHEL KELLY

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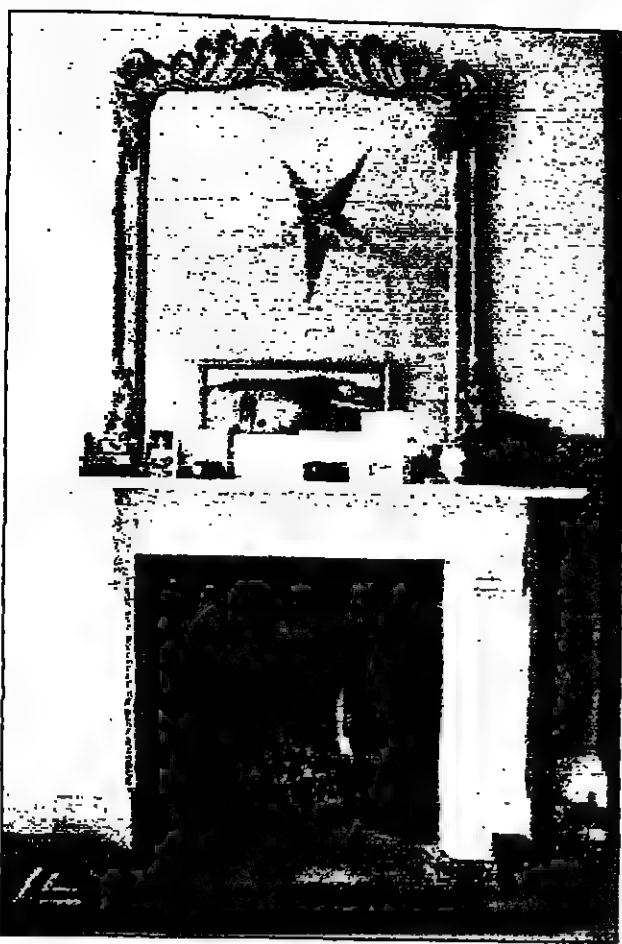
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From giant hands to grizzly bears — Philip Delves Broughton explores George Melly's bohemian rhapsody



The ground-floor fireplace in the sunny sitting room

At home in the lair of a jazzman

Not so long ago, Notting Hill Gate and the streets around Ladbroke Grove in west London were down at heel and violent, a tenement land where Rachman held sway and squatters, drug dealers and the poorest of London's immigrants ran riot. For those prepared to look beyond the squalor, however, it was also an area of vibrant cultural

HOUSE OF THE WEEK

activity, a place where post-war Britain found its multi-cultural identity. Colin MacInnes, with novels like *Ace of Spades* and *Absolute Beginners*, was its chronicler, and he and some local West Indian musicians persuaded George Melly, jazz singer, art historian, dealer and dandy, to move here in 1977. Since then,

the area has zoomed upmarket. From one end of the Portobello Road to the other, money has moved in.

Writers, artists and media types led the way, attracted by the still pungent smell of bohemia, and now the bankers have taken note and are migrating north from Chelsea, Fulham and Kensington. Where once men in vests leaned from balconies and jazz men ate breakfast in the late afternoon, now there are stripped pine floors and bonus-bought sports cars. For the likes of Melly, it is time to pack up his paintings and purple felt hats and move on.

"We moved from fairly respectable Kentish Town down here, which was considered pretty rough and funky," says Melly, still a little bleary from his performance the night before at Pizza on the Park. "It was also a very West Indian area, which didn't worry me, being a jazz man."

Wearing a bright yellow and red delft jacket, he sits on a chair modelled in the shape of a large hand and turned around so his hands sit on the back rest. Around the room are several other chairs and ashtrays also in the shape of hands. The walls of his study in the basement are covered with paintings accumulated from his time as an art dealer and subsequently from friends. As a young man, Melly was given £900 by his father, a Liverpool wool broker, to invest in paintings. He bought Magrittes, Miró and Picassos when they were still cheap, but a life dotted with financial crises saw them gradually sold off to private buyers as well as museums.

Even now, however, he is still constantly on the look out for new works, and scours galleries and the studios of new artists. It is the surreal which still excites him. Above an extraordinary art deco bed in his bedroom is a cartoonish painting, bought by Melly in Germany, of a group in a Tolkien fantasy landscape killing a polar bear. "It is so odd, it makes me laugh," he says. In 1977, Melly's four-storey house cost just £37,000. He and his wife Diana spent the same amount fixing it up. Melly has a bedroom and bathroom as well as a study in his basement. It is a lair into which he can creep unnoticed when he returns home after a night out performing.

On the ground floor are a large, light sitting room and office, separated by folding doors which have been folded back. Upstairs, on the first floor, is the main family room and kitchen, painted in light pastel colours. The kitchen looks out on to a garden square divided up into private patches like allotments. The Mellys' own patch has been redesigned into a small terrace patio which they call the "yard".

Up on the top floor are two



The art deco bed in the main bedroom surrounded by arresting images



Body sculpture in the shower

further bedrooms and access to a small roof terrace.

From the windows at the top, the surrounding streets glide off at strange, geometric angles. A jumble of tall terraced houses and council blocks stretch out to the north and east. Round the corner is a brasserie, where there is always a free calvados for Melly, and in the other direction the second-hand stalls and Portuguese bakeries of the Colborne Road; the area retains something of the character which brought the Mellys here in the first place.

"We're moving to a lovely house in Shepherd's Bush," says Melly. "It is smaller and far more manageable."

After buying their new place, some of the spare cash will go on funding Melly's latest obsession: deep-sea fishing. He produces a picture of himself in Florida, in a baseball cap and polo shirt, groaning under the weight of a colossal fish. He is living proof of the adage: old Surrealists don't die, they just move to Shepherd's Bush.

© The Melly house in St Lawrence Terrace, Notting Hill Gate, London W10, is on the market for £550,000. Agents: Chestertons Residential (0171-937 7244) and Marsh and Parsons (0171-727 9811).



The first-floor dining room (left) and the pastel-painted kitchen (right) which looks out on to a garden square



Time to pack up the purple felt hats and move on



HOME SWAP

BUYERS priced out of Kensington, London W8, are moving to the Hyde Park Estate, W2, between Paddington and the West End, where prices are a third lower. The 19th-century estate, with its stuccoed terraces and garden squares, is built on land owned by the Church Commissioners. First-floor flats start at £250,000; about £350,000 buys a small mews house. Towards Westbourne Grove, a Victorian stuccoed terraced house can be bought from £650,000, according to estate agent Knight Frank.

The Surrey stockbroker belt has long been fashionable with wealthy buyers looking for family homes. It offers unspoilt countryside, good communications (35 minutes from Waterloo to Guildford by train) and a clutch of good schools. Desirable villages include Shalford, Wotton and Bramley, where period houses with five bedrooms and pony paddocks cost from £750,000 and are in constant demand, according to Savills. A larger country house with up to 20 acres will set you back £1.1 million to £5 million, following price rises of 10-20 per cent last year.

The country house market in Ireland remains buoyant, despite the increase in Stamp Duty to 9 per cent last year. A shortage of Georgian houses in the range £400,000 to £700,000, with 20 to 50 acres within a 50-mile radius of Dublin, has driven prices up 15 per cent in the past year.



An 85-year lease on this four-bedroom, three-bathroom flat on the second floor of a white stucco-fronted building in Hyde Park Square, London W2, will set you back £850,000 (Knight Frank, 0171-938 4311).



For the same sort of money you could buy Roppeleghs, a Grade II listed 15th-century six-bedroom country house, in 40 acres of formal gardens, orchards, woodlands and paddocks, near Haslemere, Surrey (Hamptons International, 01428 642307).



In Ireland, a similar sum will buy Balles Castle, a restored seven-bedroom 13th-century castle above a wooded river valley and surrounded by its own 50 acres, near Carrigaline, Co Cork (Knight Frank, 0171-629 8171).

CHERYL TAYLOR

MARKET COMMENT



Notting Hill prices. "It's a nice, slightly offbeat pocket — a cosmopolitan neighbourhood with a lot of value to be had," he says. "Those who have moved here should look at it as a mid to long-term investment, because they'll have bought a lot of space in an up-and-coming area. There are still a lot of tatty, run-down properties because the landlords don't

take care of them, but that is all changing."

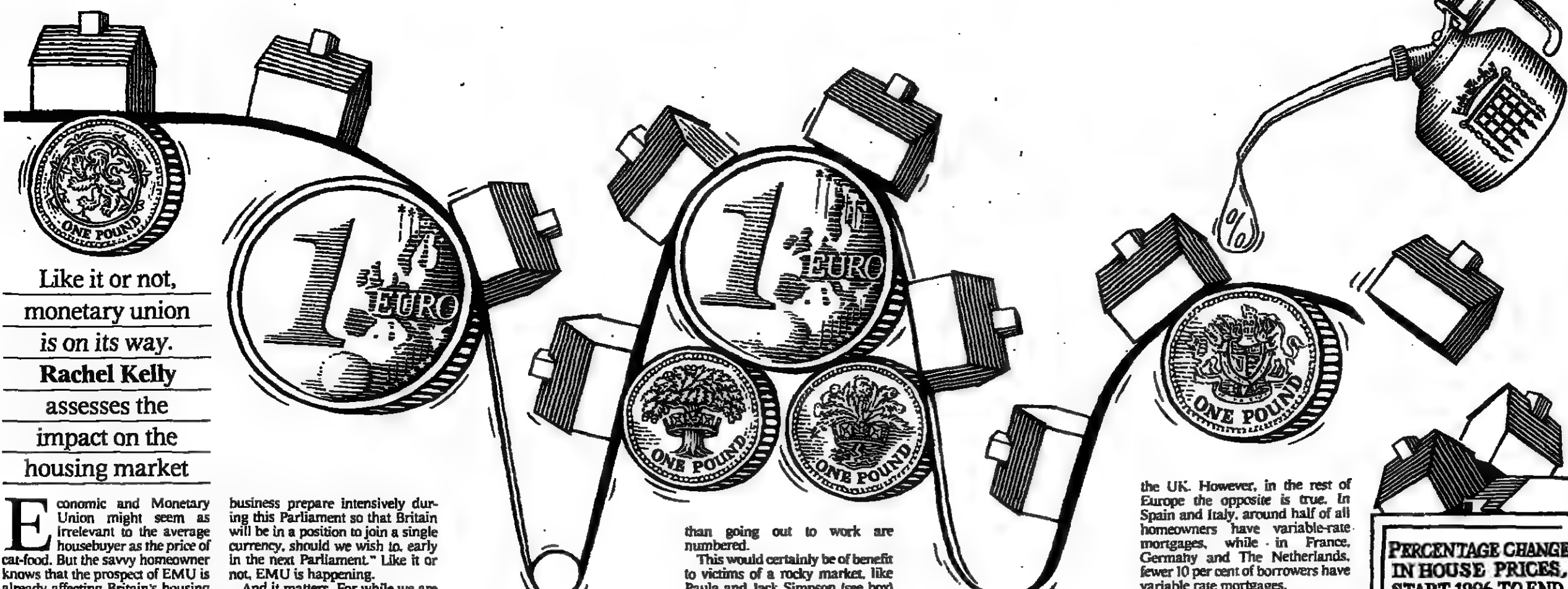
Three particularly sought-after roads are Bassett Road, Oxford Gardens and Cambridge Gardens, because of their large, mid-19th century, stucco-fronted houses. According to Mr Ash, they are comparable in style, though not in size with those of Holland Park, where the larger equivalent costs nearer £5 million; here, a six/seven bedroom 4,200sq ft house in Bassett Road fetched less than £1 million a year ago, and that would be par for the course.

EVEN IN comparison with Notting Hill, house prices are substantially lower. Mr Ash estimates that George Melly's house in St Lawrence Terrace, on the market at £560,000, would be valued at around £1 million further south. But, even in North Kensington, you are unlikely to find much choice in houses below £350,000-£400,000.

FAITH GLASGOW

What Euro money will do to your house

RICHARD ALLEN



Like it or not, monetary union is on its way. Rachel Kelly assesses the impact on the housing market

Economic and Monetary Union might seem as irrelevant to the average homeowner as the price of cat-food. But the savvy homeowner knows that the prospect of EMU is already affecting Britain's housing market and stands to influence it even more in the future.

Britain is not signed up to EMU yet. But, at the beginning of next month, European leaders convene in Brussels to take the final decision on which countries will join the single currency in the first wave on January 1, 1999.

Paul Sanderson, head of research at the Nationwide building society, says: "Britain's position is uncertain. Although it is one of the few countries able to meet the agreed criteria for membership, it will certainly exercise its 'opt-out' from membership in the first wave. Nevertheless, speculation that the Government is setting the stage for entry at some later date has intensified."

The Government has ruled out joining the single currency for the lifetime of this Parliament but appears to be planning membership after that. Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, laid out the Government's position last October: "British membership of a single currency in 1999 is not in the country's economic interests. It is essential that Government and

business prepare intensively during this Parliament so that Britain will be in a position to join a single currency, should we wish to, early in the next Parliament." Like it or not, EMU is happening.

And it matters. For while we are famously a nation of homeowners, we are also a nation of debtors. Around 66 per cent of homes are owner-occupied in Britain, a third of which are owned outright. But the rest of us have mortgages. In future, interest rates may be set by the European Central Bank rather than the Bank of England.

Mr Brown is well aware of the sensitivity of lenders and banks to EMU. "It will affect the financial industry more profoundly than any other sector of the economy," he says.

Lenders say the housing market is already being affected by EMU. Mr Sanderson says: "The fact that the markets expect us to join EMU eventually has reinforced a fall in long-term interest rates, down to the level of those which are already prevailing in Europe. This has allowed British mortgage lenders to offer attractive fixed-rate deals which take advantage of lower long-term rates. About 60 per cent of new lending is now fixed-rate. Couples are already taking advantage of fixed-rate deals as lenders look ahead to lower interest rates. EMU could have a long-term

stabilising effect on the market because of low inflation. Flomuala Earley, chief economist of the Council of Mortgage Lenders, says: "Low house-price inflation will come to be regarded as the norm within EMU." There are many victims of the market's former instability. But the days when homeowners could earn more money watching their wallpaper

than going out to work are numbered.

This would certainly be of benefit to victims of a rocky market, like Paula and Jack Simpson (see box) who lost their house in June 1996. But Mr Sanderson says that the market is already becoming less volatile. "If Britain were to enter monetary union this would lock us into lower inflation and thus create a more stable housing market. This process is already under way, and is likely to continue even if Britain were to stay out of monetary union."

There are some risks associated with the six months or so around our entry into monetary union. Mr

Sanderson says: "The problem is that if Britain adjusts its interest rates to be the same as those in the rest of Europe, we might find ourselves with rates which would be either too high or too low for domestic conditions. We are particularly vulnerable because we have so much variable-rate debt."

Variable-rate mortgages account for 80 per cent of all mortgages in

the UK. However, in the rest of Europe the opposite is true. In Spain and Italy, around half of all homeowners have variable-rate mortgages, while in France, Germany and The Netherlands, fewer than 10 per cent of borrowers have variable rate mortgages.

History suggests that those who warn of a period of instability could be right. The same principle happened in the late 1980s when interest peaked at 15 per cent. As Mr Sanderson says: "We saw how this could work during the experience with the ERM. We wound up with a recession. The cycles were out of sync within Europe. We had inappropriately high interest rates and this had a big effect on the UK housing market, helping to generate a recession."

Lower interest rates to converge with our European partners could mean a temporary property boom as low rates may encourage more people to buy houses. Some, though, feel the risks of entry are being exaggerated. Mr Sanderson says: "The market is far more stable than it was ten years ago." Ms Earley agrees: "Fears are overstated. In reality, an expectation of eventual entry is emerging, an announcement would be made after a referendum, and this would happen well in advance to allow physical preparation. This would allow a smoother transition to a new rate."

HOW A VOLATILE MARKET MADE US HOMELESS

PAULA and Jack Simpson are just one family thrown into turmoil by a volatile housing market. The couple lost their house in Hitchin, north Hertfordshire, in June 1996 after interest rate rises made it impossible for them to maintain payments on their variable-rate mortgage. Their home was repossessed.

Mrs Simpson says: "When interest rates were high in the early Nineties we got behind with the mortgage. We started having difficulties when we had children. My husband is a taxi driver. He has never stopped working but his job went downhill in the recession. We had been behind on the mortgage for two years, when out of the blue we

got a repossession order. Ten minutes in court and we were no longer home-owners."

For people like the Simpsons, the more stable housing market that some believe could come with monetary union could only be a good thing. As it was, they were forced to spend a year in run-down council accommodation. "It was a grotty house with mould and damp in all the rooms," says Mrs Simpson. They now have a better council house but the memories remain. "I never thought it could happen to us," she says.

ADAM BARNARD

Names have been changed.

PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN HOUSE PRICES, START 1996 TO END 1997.....

D	-0.9
F	0
E	2.4
P	8.8
B	12
S	12.4
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IRL	26.4
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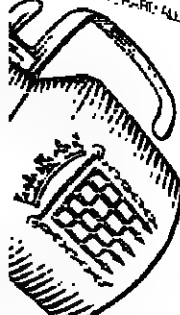
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Once they were kept to be eaten, now they live in the house. Carol Price charts the rise of the pet rabbit

From the cooking pot to the couch

Beaton is 14lb of New Zealand White bunny with a passion for watching television, listening to CDs of Gregorian chants and generally lolling about the sofa with his owners, the actress Toyah Wilcox and her musician husband, Robert Fripp, at their Wiltshire home.

Not for him the customary outdoor mini-stall complex with only a carrot for company. Beaton is one of those progressive modern indoor bunnies that the British House Rabbit Association has recently been urging us to have — fully integrated into the domestic environment, with his own litter tray.

Miss Wilcox says: "It's criminal to stick rabbits in hutches at the bottom of the garden. The more freedom and affection you give them, the more personality they develop and the more sociable and intelligent they become."

The status and popularity of rabbits is rising steadily. Animals that, only 30 or 40 years ago, were kept for the cooking pot are now the nation's third most popular pets, after cats and dogs. Three million rabbits are kept as pets in Britain.

Such popularity has led to a choice of more than 50 rabbit breeds. The smallest — the Netherland Dwarf and Polish varieties — can weigh only two-and-a-half pounds and the biggest, like the Finnish Giant or Vienna Blue, can be the size of a corgi.

Anne Mitchell, of the British House Rabbit Association, says: "Miniature and lop-eared varieties seem to be most in demand." This includes the classic English lop, a rabbit which, to the non-specialist observer, appears to have ears like windsocks.

You have to be a true bunny expert like John Self, president of the British Rabbit Council, to appreciate their finer attributes. Mr Self, who is a veteran show rabbit judge and rabbit breeder — which surely has to be one of the easier achievements on earth — defines a top-class bunny as having "a good head and body shape, coat quality and pattern, clear bright eyes, hardness of flesh, clear feet and general good health". Sadly, many of us are not quite so clued up when we spot that little bunny in the pet shop. We do not realise the range of health problems that rabbits face. Here is a taster: "Dear Fur & Feather magazine, I have an 18-month castrated

lop buck who has always had problems with a sticky bottom... It gives you the idea.

But worse still seems to be the discovery that when a rabbit reaches sexual maturity — at around five months — it undergoes violent hormonal mood swings, known in the trade as "Bunny PMT". Fighting or mating seems to be the only thing on their minds, and they become rather trying.

"The does are the worst," says Ms Mitchell. "They get grumpy and aggressive. Bucks just rush around the place spraying everything." Many people might give up on rabbits at this point, unaware of how neutering and spaying can turn bunnies back to their sweeter selves. Miss Wilcox has only ever kept one rabbit at a time — always male — since the age of seven, "because my sister had two once, and after three months she had 17, all charging around this garden in Wimbledon mating with each other. There seemed no end to it."

She believes that bucks are better-natured than does, though Beaton — who has not been castrated — views the Wilcox/Fripp home as a *ménage à trois*. "He sleeps in the bedroom with us," says Miss Wilcox, "and he knows the difference between the human sexes, and a bit of male territorial-type spraying goes on."

"Often he'll spray the chair Robert has just been sitting on. Once Robert came home to discover he'd unwittingly spent a whole morning at the bank, round the shops and on other errands with Beaton's pee streaked down his trousers and he got rather annoyed. Yet when I'm away Beaton and Robert are inseparable. Rabbits are great, affectionate company even if they



Toyah Wilcox with Beaton: "He sleeps in our bedroom"

don't do much. You can get very attached to them."

Ms Mitchell who provides a helpline for the British House Rabbit Association and runs a rabbit rescue centre in

Sussex, thinks that the steady tide of unwanted and abandoned rabbits in this country could be much reduced if owners had better welfare knowledge before buying them. She says: "The BHA is against the sale of rabbits in pet shops because they cannot always sex them correctly or provide full enough after-sale advice. It is better to get one from a reputable breeder."

For information on rabbit care, contact the British House Rabbit Association helpline 01403 267658 or the Rabbit Charity (0181-888 0001), which publishes a newsletter on rabbit care. For details of reputable rabbit breeds, contact the British Rabbit Council: 01638 676043.

Fur & Feather magazine: 01473 652789.

For a free copy of Top to Tail, a guide to rabbit care, send an A4 size to: Pet Plan, West Cross House, 2 West Cross Way, Bredford, Middlesex TW8 9DX.

LOOK AFTER YOUR RABBIT

- Rabbits are incessant chewers so electricity cables should be protected with plastic piping or hidden under carpets. Remove potentially poisonous houseplants.
- Your rabbit will need its own secure living quarters indoors. Hutches should be a minimum of four times the adult size.
- Start litter tray training by putting the tray in the rabbit hutch. Place some already soiled litter in it. Make sure he has got well used to using it before bringing him indoors.
- Start his forays indoors under close supervision and for limited periods — ten minutes to begin with — building up to longer ones. Prevent furniture destruction by giving something else to chew such as cardboard or newspaper.
- Clumsy handling, particularly by children, can easily break rabbits' backs and is a reason why many have to be put down each year. Let them come to you on their terms. Also be aware that some dogs (hurchers, for instance) may not be safe with rabbits.
- For fuller details on the above, send an a4 to the British House Rabbit Association, PO Box 346, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE99 1FA.



Rabbits are now Britain's third most popular pets: easy to keep and to walk

A VET WRITES

I hear it is "Worming Week". Is this a gimmick to sell wormers or should I take it seriously and worm Sheba, my four-year-old spayed Labrador. I've never seen any sign of worms from her. Blackie, my cat, gets tapeworms occasionally but one tapeworm tablet seems to get rid of them and he's never ill.

You should worm Sheba. Not for her sake but because there is a remote risk of children picking up roundworm larvae from soil or grass contaminated by dog faeces. Adult *Toxocara* (roundworms) live in the dog's intestines. They are 3-8in long, pale beige in colour, round in cross section and look like a piece of plastic-covered wire. The worm eggs pass out with the dog's motion.

After a few weeks or months, depending on the temperature, the eggs hatch into larvae. When a dog swallows these they pass into his bowel where the adult worms live. But they don't stay there. They set off on a circular tour. Through the bowel wall, into the blood stream, wander through the muscles, liver and lungs, up the windpipe to be swallowed again to return, as young adults, to the intestine. Some larvae stop on the way and encyst in the muscles to resume their journey when a bitch becomes pregnant. They can cross the placenta to infect puppies before they are born.

That's the normal life cycle of *Toxocara*. But children can pick up the worm. By dropping a lollipop on infected grass and licking it clean, or eating a sandwich with unwashed hands after a game of football. Then the larvae are in an unsuitable host. Most don't develop further and do no harm. A few start to migrate, and get lost. In rare instances they reach the back of the eye, damage the retina and sight in that eye. Usually temporarily, but other times there is permanent damage. It is rare. Less than 50 children per year, but a most unhappy happening for those few. That's why you should worm Sheba at least twice a year: to be a responsible dog owner and do your part in making *Toxocara* an endangered species.

Blackie's tapeworms are no risk to human health and not likely to upset the cat either.

Where can I get a Hiatt? My dog won't stop pulling when he's on a lead and I'm told this halter type head collar will stop him. But my pet shop doesn't know what I'm talking about.

Halters are stocked by many pet shops, so try some others. If you're unsuccessful write to The Company of Animals, PO Box 23, Chersey, Surrey KT16 0PU. Make sure you get one that is the right size for your dog.

JAMES ALLCOCK

Write to The Times Vet, Weekend, The Times, Pennington Street, London E1 9XN. Advice is offered without legal responsibility. He regrets that he cannot reply to letters personally.

Not enough room to swing a cat

Keeping a house full of animals is not good for them or healthy for you, says Jo Carlowe

When Nigel Shelton, an RSPCA inspector, received keys and a letter stating: "I have left my cats. Can you sort them out?" he expected a run-of-the-mill inspection.

He visited the abandoned council flat in Bow, East London, and, noting the over-powering caty stench that hit him on approach, he anticipated a find of about 20 cats. However, he was not prepared for the sight that greeted him — cats everywhere. He counted 97.

Just down the road in Poplar, Mr Shelton's colleague, inspector Mark Martin, was dealing with a similar case. A Tower Hamlets animal warden had contacted him about a woman causing an environmental nuisance.

The woman, a pensioner, had accumulated 75 cats. "It was a bit whiffy in there. The woman was devastated when we said they'd have to go, but she realised she had a problem. I took 34 cats in one go. We let her keep the ones that were too old to reproduce," Mr Martin says.

In both these cases the owners were not prosecuted, unlike Tina Blunsden, 38, of East London. Last week, magistrates ordered Miss Blunsden to pay £1,200 costs and banned her from owning any animals for 12 months after she had been found with 28 Yorkshire Terriers crammed into her 10ft by 12ft bed.

The authorities could have imposed a life ban, a £5,000 fine and six months' imprisonment.

However, Miss Blunsden feels that her world has been shattered as all 28 members of her family have been taken to be rehoused. "I kept dogs because I couldn't have children.



Tina Blunsden kept 28 dogs in her bedsit (left). The RSPCA found 97 cats in this London home (right)

They were so nice to me — the most important thing in my life. I think a lot of my parents, although they may not think a lot of me at the moment, but the animals come first. My hobby was the animals, my work was the animals. I doted on them all," she says.

Before her encounter with the RSPCA, Miss Blunsden, who is registered disabled, was often seen wheeling a supermarket trolley full of Yorkshire Terriers along the Finchley Road in northwest London — an incongruous figure among the well-heeled Hampstead shoppers.

"I used to exercise the dogs in the trolley. We always had an outing," she says.

Lee Hopgood, the RSPCA inspector who dealt with her case, views Miss Blunsden's activities as an obsession. "She needed to be surrounded by dogs all the time," he says. When he first visited Miss Blunsden at her flat he found 27 dogs, some squashed into storage crates.

The remaining pets roamed free but even then the flat was tiny, with much of the floor space taken up by two beds. Some of the dogs were allowed on Miss Blunsden's bed — "my natural hot water bottles," she calls them.

Mr Hopgood advised Miss Blunsden to cut the numbers down to six, but he returned eight weeks later and found dog number 28. "I'd already paid for it," she says.

Some of the dogs had skin complaints and others were prone to fighting — the air was stifling, and, as a result, Inspector Hopgood felt compelled to act.

According to the RSPCA, multiple ownership is on the increase. Keep-

ing a menagerie of animals in a residential dwelling is not in itself an offence. It becomes one, however, when an animal is mistreated or when the property becomes an environmental health hazard.

Sadly, Miss Blunsden, and other multiple pet owners, are motivated by the belief that they are being kind to their animals. Their failing is not deliberately cruelty but the huge gulf between their perception of helping

these pets and their ability to actually do so.

Anne Conybeare, animal welfare officer for Welwyn and Hatfield Council, herself a multiple pet owner, would like the Home Office to introduce compulsory pet neutering, tagging, inoculations and annual inspections for multiple owners.

Some multiple owners, however, are already on top of this and run their menageries successfully. Sian Holt, a professional cellist, keeps 13 cats and assorted rodents in her north London maisonette. Her cats, mostly elderly or disabled rescued pets, are neutered, vaccinated and well-looked after. Her home is clean and does not smell and the neighbours do not complain.

"I think it is quite possible to live with lots of animals and maintain a good standard of hygiene," she says. "This is not just for the cats' sake but also for mine. We have a cat run (in the garden) so they can go out safely without going to the toilet in other people's gardens or being a menace."

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But whether a person treats their animals badly or well, with knowledge or in ignorance, the common strand that links many menagerie owners is their disappointment in humanity.

Miss Blunsden, for example, was born disabled and says she has had to endure a lifetime of being taunted. Her dogs, however, show her total acceptance.

Ms Holt, too, says her animals contribute to her sense of self-worth which she did not receive from her parents. "My father left when I was very young and he found it incredibly difficult to show any emotion. If you give warmth to an animal you get it back one-thousand-fold."

As if echoing a theme, Ms Conybeare comes to the same conclusion. "I trust animals more than humans. I have been let down by humans," she says.

Sometimes humans let down their animals as well. While multiple ownership remains unregulated, some pets are being killed by misplaced kindness.

Forget the chocs — give the dog a bone

WHILE THIS time of year may be a chocolate-fest for us humans, sharing Easter eggs with our pet dogs could end in disaster. Harsh as it may sound, just 200g of ordinary chocolate could prove fatal to our four-legged friends.

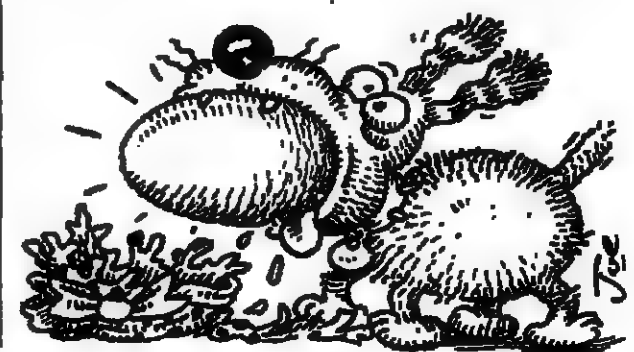
Chocolate intended for human consumption contains theobromine, which reacts with the dog's body systems and can lead to serious heart and respiratory problems. Chocolate poisoning, if not treated, could kill a dog.

Alison Hudd, a veterinary nurse and member of the British Veterinary Nursing Association, explains: "Many dog owners are unaware of

the potential dangers of a small amount of chocolate, and this time of year is worrying because there is so much of it around. This calls for extra vigilance around the home, especially if there are children in the household."

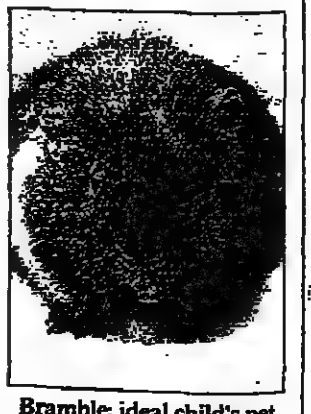
But it doesn't have to be all bad news. There are chocolate-style doggy treats available from most stores and supermarkets, which means that Rover can still share in the Easter fun. For treats, call Hartz (015-978 4271) or buy Armgate, stocked at your local pet shop. Or give a dog what he likes best: a bone.

NEIL FULLBROOK



ADOPT ME

BRAMBLE is a six-month-old brown Agouti guinea pig who was brought in to Wood Green Animal Shelter when his owners moved house. He is very tame, and would make an ideal first pet for a young child, or as a companion to another guinea pig or rabbit. If you would like to adopt Bramble please contact Wood Green Animal Shelter (01480 830014).



Bramble: ideal child's pet

WEEKEND COURSES AND ACTIVITIES

Chip away at the old block



Perhaps expecting Mount Rushmore results after lesson one is optimistic but you can master the basics of stone carving in Sussex next weekend

APRIL 17-19
Working with willow. Making bird houses and homes at the Somerset Levels Centre, Burrowbridge (01963 370413). From £135.
Multi-activity breaks. Edale, Derbyshire. At the YHA (01433 670302). Two nights, including full-board, tuition and equipment, from £95.
The soprano in pink 17th and 18th century song, spinet music and talks. At Audley End, Essex with English Heritage (0171-973 3396). Price £5.75.
Wildlife watch for families. Gardening for wildlife. Otters and other riverside mammals. At the Flatford Mill Centre, East Bergholt, Essex (01206 298283). From £85-£105, inclusive.
Birds of Ley and coast. A birdwatching weekend at the Slapton Ley Field Centre, Kingsbridge, Devon (01548 580446). From £79-£105.
Wine appreciation. The industrial heritage of South Wales. Yoga. Music making for beginners. At various locations this weekend with H.F. Holidays (0181-905 9538). From £124 to £194.
Learn to swim. Entertaining single-handed, how to give a

dinner party on one's own, with recipes. Both at the Earmley Concourse, Chichester, West Sussex (01243 670392). Price £149 residential, £103 non-residential.
Belly dancing. At the Mountain Hall, Queensbury, West Yorkshire (01274 816258). Price per course £85 residential, £60 non-residential.
Stone carving workshop. At West Dean College, Chichester, West Sussex (01243 811301). Price from £150 residential.

APRIL 24-26
Scottish yoga weekend in the Trossachs. At Lendrick Lodge, Callender, Perthshire, with the Ruth White Yoga Centre (0181-644 0309). From £108.
Motor racing in single-seat racing cars. An introductory course with personal instruction and solo laps. With Anglian Activity Breaks, Norwich (01602 700770). Price £120, accommodation available.
Reading Latin A jazz weekend. D.H. Lawrence and E.M. Forster. An introduction to world religions. Subjects under discussion at the University of Cambridge. Madingley Hall (01954 210636). Price per course £120, inclusive.

Memoir writing. Garden sculpture. A George Gershwin celebration. At the Wensum Lodge, King Street, Norwich (01603 66602). Price per course £84, inclusive.
Upstairs, downstairs: life in an English country house. Buddhism and philosophy. Ancient Egyptian religion. At Dillington House, Ilminster, Somerset (01460 55866). From £105 residential, £79 non-residential.
Baskets, bunches and boxes. A flower-arranging weekend at Horncastle College, Horncastle, Lincs (01507 522449). Price £86 full board.
Walking in spring. A weekend of guided spring walks, each eight miles long, at Chichester Harbour and the South Downs. Also Calligraphy for fun and painting and sketching. All from the Earmley Concourse, Chichester, West Sussex (01243 670392). Prices from £149 residential, £103 non-residential.
Conservation weekends. British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (01491 839766). On the Jurassic Coast of Dorset, repairing the southwest coastal path or fossil-hunting. Price £100 inclusive.
Medieval women. Decorative stained glass. Alexander technique. At Urchfont Manor, Devizes, Wilt (01380 840495). From £99-£104, inclusive.

MAY 1-3
Spring into summer. A four-day health and fitness weekend, with yoga, exercises, workouts, pool sessions and line dancing at the Earmley Concourse, Chichester, Sussex (01243 670392). Price £218 residential, £144 non-residential.
Surfing, windsurfing, ski surfing, kayaking. Canadian canoeing, sailing, climbing. At Outdoor Adventure, Bude, Cornwall (01288 361312). Weekend rates from £123, inclusive of full board, tuition and equipment.
A flute weekend. The intermediate cellist. Two courses

at the Benslow Music Trust, Hitchin, Herts (01462 459446). From £87-£111, inclusive.
Bird song. A badger weekend. Two short courses for nature lovers at the Field Studies Council Centre, Preston Montford, Shrewsbury (01743 850674). From £75-£105.

Advanced bridge. Don Giovanni. Patchwork and quilting. Architectural clues. At the Hill Residential Centre, Abergavenny, Gwent (01495 333777). Price per course £88.
Life and landscape painting. China painting. Bridge. Continental lacemaking. At the

Horncastle College, Horncastle, Lincs (01507 522449). Price per course from £86, inclusive.
Inventing, inventors and inventions. German. An introduction to aromatherapy. All this weekend at the Lancashire College, Chorley, Lancs (01257 260909). Price per course £96.

Pottery throwing and turning. Wood engraving. Watercolours for beginners. Jewellery making. Courses at the West Dean College, Chichester, West Sussex (01243 811301). Price per course £150.

ROBIN NEILLANDS



Damon Hill learnt young from father Graham; take the wheel of a single-seater racing car in Norwich, April 24-26

EXCLUSIVE READER OFFER

FREE RHS MEMBERSHIP

PLUS FREE ENTRY TO 11 BEAUTIFUL GARDENS

Today *The Times* offers readers the opportunity to become a member of the RHS for four months FREE. The trial membership covers May, June, July and August. Simply collect four of the six tokens published in *The Times* this week and attach them to the direct debit form, right.

AS AN RHS MEMBER YOUR BENEFITS INCLUDE:

- a saving of up to £10 on tickets for the Chelsea Flower Show (May 19-22)
- a free monthly copy of *The Garden* magazine (worth £2.75)
- unlimited free entry to 26 beautiful gardens throughout Britain including Wisley in Surrey, Rosemoor in Devon and Hyde Hall in Essex
- plus free gardening advice from RHS experts, the opportunity to apply for free seeds from Wisley Garden and access to the famous Lindley Library for reference and borrowing.

VISIT A BEAUTIFUL GARDEN — FREE

If you do not want to become a member, you can still save up to £5 on the cost of entry at one of the 11 gardens listed below. Simply attach three Free Garden tokens to a voucher published on Tuesday and yesterday, and present them at the garden of your choice or at the RHS Westminster Flower Show.

CHOOSE FROM THESE ELEVEN GARDENS

Visit one of the following before May 31, 1998:

RHS Garden Wisley, Woking, Surrey, Tel: 01463 224234 (normally £5) Mon-Sat

RHS Garden Rosemoor, Great Torrington, North Devon, Tel: 01803 624067 (normally £4) daily

RHS Garden Hyde Hall, Retford, Cheshire, Tel: 01245 400256 (normally £3) daily

Mease Baylands Gardens, Mease, Merseyside, South Wirral, Tel: 0151 2530123 (normally £4) (check times)

Ryton Organic Gardens, Ryton-on-Dunsmore, Coventry, Tel: 01203 303517 (normally £2.50) daily

Bruggate Horticultural Trust, Faversham, Kent, Tel: 01795 533388 (normally £2.50) check times

The Gardens Home, Buckland Monachorum, Nr Yelverton, Devon, Tel: 01822 854769 (normally £3.50) daily

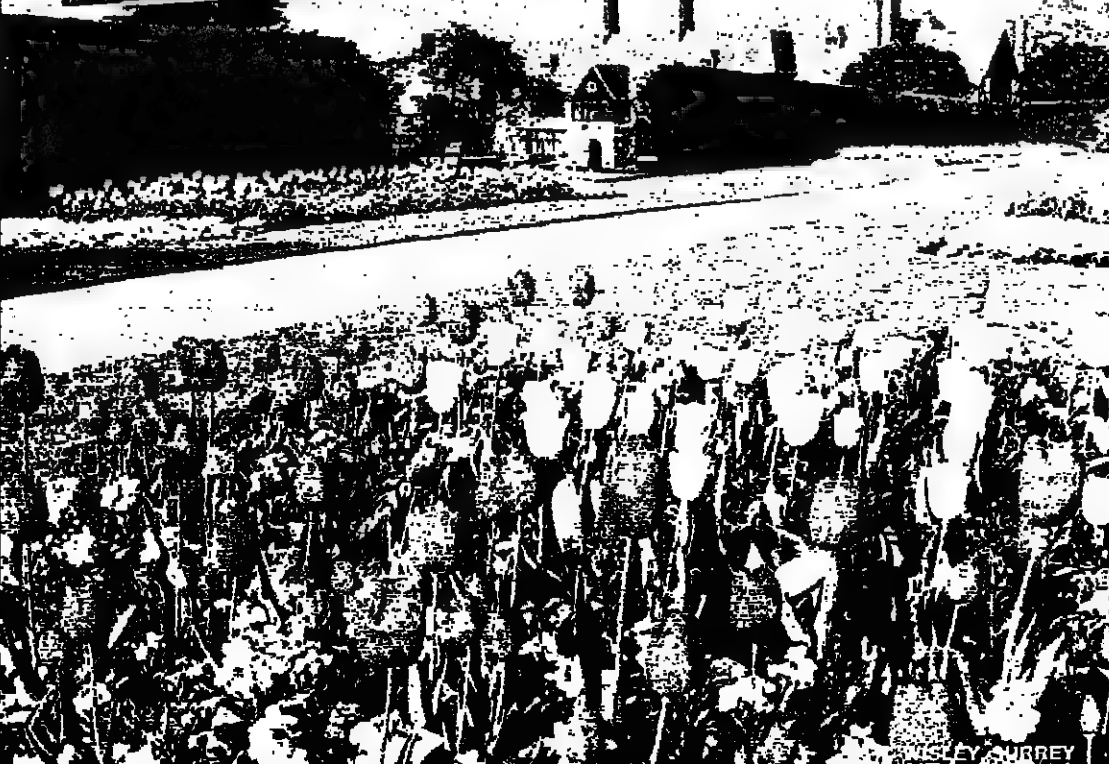
Yalding Organic Gardens, Bawsey Road, Yalding, Maidstone, Kent, Tel: 01622 614850 (normally £2.50) check times

Tresham Gardens Trust, Newson Smith, Nr Falmouth, Cornwall, Tel: 01326 250448 (normally £3.20) daily

Trevelthick Gardens, Grampound Road, Truro, Cornwall, Tel: 01726 883847 (normally £3) daily

Fairlie Abbey, Clard, Somerset, Tel: 01460 221290 (normally £3.75) daily

Or visit the RHS Westminster Flower Show, April 29, 1998, 10am-5pm RHS New Hall, Westminster, London, SW1.



APPLICATION FOR RHS MEMBERSHIP

I would like four months free trial membership. If I decide to join the RHS for a further 12 months, £31 will be deducted directly from my bank account at the end of August. I can cancel the mandate at any time by writing to my bank.

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Daytime tel. no. _____

I authorise you until further notice in writing to pay the Royal Horticultural Society direct debits from the account detailed on this form. I understand that the Royal Horticultural Society may change the amounts and dates only after giving me prior notice.

For official use only — RHS membership number

Originator's code: 986979

Name and address of your bank _____

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Bank sort code _____

Signed _____ Date _____

Return to: The Royal Horticultural Society, PO Box 313, London SW1P 2ZE

Terms and Conditions: Applications for membership must be received by April 30, 1998. Four months' free membership expires on August 31, 1998. If you decide to join the RHS for a further 12 months, £31 will be debited from your account at the end of August.



'One house, whose owners' eyesight was failing, had swarms of mice running across floors, dancing on tables and eating the food'

Almost every time I turn the television on, a tiny, super-intelligent mouse is performing feats of gymnastics as it outwits two bumbling humans — part of the Easter publicity for the Hollywood film *Mousehunt*.

The scenario rings horribly true, at least in this house. I'm incapable of being brutal enough to repel mouse invasions. I always end up filling humane traps with Belgian chocolate, or sprinkling cayenne pepper around in the hope that it'll irritate the intruders so much they'll decide to leave of their own accord. (It doesn't, of course.)

Given my limitations, I thought it would be useful to meet a professional mouse assassin, so I tracked down John Symonds, who has worked as a pest controller in Dorset for around 18 years. Lively, bewhiskered and full of charm, he sat by his fireside with a glass of Benedictine and tried to explain the rudiments of pest control. He doesn't do it any more: he's reverted to his old trade of village gravedigger, and I couldn't help thinking that the sense of humour required for the two jobs must be similar.

Too much good will for hunting

His favourite task wasn't mouse control — it was fumigating fleas. "Fumigating fleas was fun because you'd go to someone's house, and they'd feel awful — embarrassed — and you'd say, 'Oh, everyone has fleas', and they'd be so pleased. See, if they had rats they could blame the people next door, but you can't do that with fleas."

His particular area of expertise was hornets, and he had a special, ultra-risky method of dealing with them which involved using no goggles or special clothes. "You were supposed to wear protective clothing, but I never did," he explains — instead, an old fertiliser bag, a can of fly spray and a rat spoon were all the tools he needed. A rat spoon is a very long metal spoon for setting bait in inaccessible places: John Symonds's was a three-foot, ex-army serving spoon.

"You had to be brave. Those nests would hang down like a lampshade, and

I'd get under and spray up through the hole they were coming out of and then, as quickly as I could, I knocked the nest down with my rat spoon so the whole lot fell into the bag. Fly spray knocks hornets out, but one time I was driving a nest to Bearminster tip in my van and they ate their way out of the fertiliser bag. Made a ripping noise as they ate the plastic — and then they were all over the car."

Although he made a living from destroying them, John is still fascinated by hornet behaviour. He likes the way they work all night on their nests, instead

DOWN TO EARTH



LUCY PINNEY

and determined mouse, like the one in *Mousehunt*, he snorted: "Intelligence! I was out to poison the buggers, not to think about what they could do!"

He does have a story about a house completely taken over by mice, but it

doesn't have the sort of plot Hollywood would want to make. The house was at Sandford Orcas, and the owners were a retired Colonel and his wife, whose eyesight was failing with old age. John was called out by their home-carer, who'd found swarms of mice running across the floors, dancing on the tables and eating the food.

"I put down a poison called Alphachlorose. It has a queer effect. Once the mice eat it they fall about as if they're drunk, then they sit down and laugh at you — and then they swell and blow up. Causes a bit of a riot. Next morning the home-carer made the poor old people toast for breakfast and there was a funny smell. She hadn't noticed there were mice in the toaster. I can never eat toast now."

Unlike me with my half-hearted attempts to get rid of mice, John Symonds never used traps. He used

poison because traps are too labour-intensive and need to be inspected every day. He has regrets about this because however carefully he placed bait with his rat spoon, the odd drowsy mouse would inevitably wander into the open and be eaten by a sparrow hawk.

It's a rare poison that doesn't kill a whole chain of animals in the wild according to John. "They always reckoned strychnine killed nine times and zinc seven. And as for moles — they used to say one poisoned worm would kill an acre of moles because moles'll eat one another. It isn't an everyday practice, but it does happen."

John's most grisly story would probably amuse a mouse. It concerns a farm sale he went to a few years ago where one of the lots was an 18th-century mantrap with wicked-looking teeth. After this had sold for a huge sum, John got drinking with the farmer who told him it had been used quite recently. Being troubled by poachers, he'd been unable to resist putting it out in his fields — and caught the village postman.

A friend in tweed is a friend indeed

Harris tweed has shaken off its fuddy-duddy image. And the crofters have fashion maverick John Galliano to thank, says Heather Kirby

When John Galliano launched his own Autumn 98 collection and the couture collection of Christian Dior with dramatic outfits made of Harris tweed, glasses were raised in celebration in the Outer Hebrides.

Those few short strolls down the catwalk in Paris were proof positive of the renaissance of a cloth that provides a way of life for hundreds of remote crofters. Finally, Harris tweed has taken on a sophisticated image that appeals to a young generation.

Derick Murray, chairman of the KM Harris Tweed Group, is naturally delighted. "This has been a major breakthrough for us," he says. "In the past, the person who bought Harris tweed was a man in his fifties who probably passed on his jacket to his son. We had to move on from that to survive."

"Having John Galliano use Harris tweed is the best thing that could have happened to us. I am absolutely delighted. The big manufacturers of women's fashion watch what these Paris guys are doing; they work off them."

Galliano himself says that he is greatly pleased with the new Harris tweed. "Creativity knows no nationality," he says of the novel cross fertilisation between Scotland and Paris.

In the 1960s there were 2,000 freelance weavers scattered throughout the islands of Harris, Lewis, Benbecula, North and South Uist and Barra. Twenty years ago they were down to 1,200, and ten years ago there were just 400.

The problem for the islanders was twofold: the market for men's jackets in the scratchy, indestructible tweed worn for hunting, shooting and fishing was shrinking; and the manufacturers who supply women's ready-to-wear fashions work on cutting tables that are twice as wide as traditional looms.

Two marketing experts, Susie McHugh and Heather Tilbury, were hired by the KM Harris Tweed Group, an



From remote field to high fashion: a crofter at work

amalgam of three mills: Kenneth Mackenzie Ltd, Kenneth Macleod Ltd and the Harris Tweed Trading Company formed to promote Harris tweed.

A survey conducted by the group among designers, manufacturers and women customers resulted in a demand for softer, lighter, more versatile tweed that drapes and handles well in beautiful colours — and in twice the width.

Large manufacturers who use laser cutting equipment are not geared up to working with a heavy, narrow cloth just 75cm wide instead of the 150cm width they need.

"We visited the islands to

explain to the weavers they would have to adapt or die," Mrs Tilbury says. "There was an educational job to be done. No one could sell their fabric if they didn't make it the way designers wanted it. In the fashion world there is a good feeling for Harris tweed — everyone knows it means quality, that it is the only material in the world that is still hand-made. But if it does not conform to today's thinking in terms of weight, and cannot be worked with because of the practical difficulty such as the width, then the weavers would be on a downward spiral. And time was running out for them."

Making tweed from a superfine of 260-280g per square metre to the medium of 333-353g (compared to the old 470g), was the relatively easy part. Designers such as Vivienne Westwood, Bella Freud, Ralph Lauren, Jil Sander, Romeo Gigli, Luisa Beccaria and Versace were tempted to make it up into wonderful suits and dresses. But it is the ready-to-wear industry that offers the potential for growth.

The narrow width was still a barrier to Harris tweed's acceptance in the mass market where they make clothes for the high street. Again the mills, which account for 95 per cent of sales, joined forces, this time to tackle the problem of finding someone who could produce a double loom.

"We contacted a number of companies about developing a new loom but they looked at the requirements, saw the problems and said it was not possible," Mr Murray says.

Eventually they stumbled upon John Griffiths, an industrial designer with a small company in Washington, Tyne and Wear. After a series of trials with the crofters, he invented a new hand loom made of steel instead of cast iron, twice as wide as the old looms, lighter and quieter to use and, at £14,000, not exorbitantly expensive.

So far there are 135 crofters who have decided the investment is worth the risk. More are being trained at Lewis Castle College, Stornoway. Some have decided they are either too old to learn new tricks or are waiting to see if the revolution has really arrived.

Ken Bartolomy, 55, formerly an industrial banker in London and secretary of the Harris Tweed Weavers Association, says: "When I started weaving ten years ago the industry was declining fast. We were impressed by the presentation made to us by Susie McHugh and Heather Tilbury and what they have done in marketing Harris tweed is very much appreciated up here."

"We knew we had to do something drastic and now it looks like it is paying off. My son, Ian, is 30 and he is weaving with me. We feel that there is a future in weaving for us now. The new looms are much easier to handle. They're not so heavy, dirty or noisy and they can produce a very wide range of colours. It all adds up to providing much more interesting work for us."

Another weaver on the island of Lewis, 58-year-old John Macmillan, borrowed £3,900 to finance his new loom. Mr Macmillan is married with four children, he has been weaving for 30 years.

"I knew that something along these lines would come to us as a result of the demand for single-width cloth going down year after year. The new loom is far easier for us to



In the '98 collections of Christian Dior (left) and John Galliano (right), Harris tweed is at the cutting edge

work on — it's like pedalling a bicycle downhill.

"It cost a lot of money, but I do not regret that. It has been quiet, but I am sure the work will come. We can make tweeds with many colour combinations, as many as you like.

We could never do that with the old looms."

From time immemorial the inhabitants of the west of Scotland have made cloth entirely by hand. As the Industrial Revolution reached Scotland, the mainland turned to



mechanisation but the Outer Hebrides retained their traditional processes.

In 1884 the Earl of Dunmore, a proprietor of Harris, had the Murray tartan copied by Harris weavers in tweed. It was so successful that Lady

Dunmore sold the tweed to her aristocratic friends.

That was the beginning of the Harris tweed industry. Now, with new technology and an endorsement from Paris's golden boy, the renaissance has arrived.



So far 135 crofters have bought the new double-width looms

Country schools are victims of own success

They were the bumpkin schools. For generations, secondary modern schools in the countryside provided children with little more than a grounding in the "three Rs" and an introduction to rustic arts and crafts. A look through the 1950 inspector's report on Piggott School, Wargrave, Berkshire, for example, paints a clear picture of its aims and objectives.

"The focus of the life of the school," it states, "is the handicraft and needlework rooms." The report follows up with two observations. The writer worries that "... the incidence of retarded pupils has given cause for concern". But praise is given for their "good country manners". Tugged fore-

Rural schools are too crowded, says Fred Redwood

locks, presumably, were a speciality.

How times have changed. Comprehensive education brought the rural schools into line with their urban counterparts. No longer could the town grammar schools cream off the more talented pupils.

Now, with increased parental choice, the country comprehensives are an extremely popular option for parents of secondary-age children — even those living some distance away in the towns.

The class of 1950 at the still-rural Piggott School would find it changed completely from their schoolday memories. The present-day school is one of the most successful in Berkshire. Its A-level points score of 17.9 is the best in the area and 25 per cent of entrants last year gained ten grades A-C at GCSE.

Classroom discipline appears not to be an issue: visitors are free to sample lessons in any room they please. After-school activities are various, with music a speciality. And with its light, airy atmosphere and spacious grounds, it is just the kind of school most caring parents seek for their children.

And seek it they do. The Piggott attracts a large per-



Country comprehensives are being stretched by the urban children attending them

centage of its intake from Reading — a town with a growing reputation for street crime and violence. The pupil roll of 250 in 1950 has expanded to nearly 900 today; 40 per cent of the pupils come from outside the locality.

Dr Keith Atton, the headmaster, understands why his school is so popular: "Parents

like a safe rural location. There are fewer malign influences here than in the town."

There is a flip side to the success of rural comprehensives, such as The Piggott. Harrow Way School in Andover, Hampshire, can, in many ways, match the standards of any comprehensive in the country. Chris Woodhead, the

Chief Inspector of Schools, has selected it for his Good School Award — one of only 52 so named in Britain. Twenty-five per cent of pupils gain eight or more A-C grades at GCSE. The school has a particularly strong reputation for drama, music and sport.

Yet Harrow Way has seen a steady seepage of pupils going

to other schools. Four years ago it had 870 on roll; next year there will be just 715. One reason for this decline in popularity is the competition offered by rural schools.

Andover is a London overspill town, with a concrete centre and huge housing estates. But close by are the chocolate-box villages of the Test Valley.

Buses now run children the 18 miles from Harrow Way to The Clere — a country school situated near the horse-racing village of Kingsclere. Others choose Whitchurch: a town associated with the former Master of the Rolls, Lord Denning.

Many prefer the eight-mile journey to pretty Stockbridge. Chris Overton, the head teacher, describes the effect this is having on his school.

"It's demoralising for my staff when, despite all their achievements, more parents opt for other schools," he says. "The shrinking roll affects our

budget, which could mean we won't be able to maintain our present high standards."

The increased popularity of rural comprehensives threatens to destroy the small-school ambience which is their most attractive feature.

Peter Harman was a teacher at The Piggott in the early Sixties. There was a farm and an orchard, with immaculate gardens tended by every boy in the school in those days. Mr Harman has mixed views about recent changes.

"This is a very good school today but it was more of a family in the Sixties. The teachers were closer to the children. It's not like that anymore — The Piggott has lost its country identity, with in-comers from the towns."

For many schools then it is a no-win situation: the more pupils attend a school, the less attention each child receives. And the more brighter children who travel from urban areas, the harder it is for local schools to improve standards.

Horror on the highway

Roads are becoming more perilous for riders, says Carol Price

The evening of June 28, 1995, was clear and bright. It was also the evening that Terrapin, a beloved bay gelding belonging to Ellie Hill, international secretary of the British Horse Trials Association, lost its life on the B4086 between Banbury and Warwick.

Miss Hill, an experienced rider who prides herself on safety awareness, is haunted by the memory. "A car suddenly came up behind me and Terrapin, on a straight bit of road, at such speed that it shunted us 20ft on the bonnet before stopping." After blacking out she came round to find her horse had two broken back legs and horrific injuries to his hindquarters.

She says: "Words cannot describe the horror of seeing a horse you love in that state. It was an hour before a slaughterhouse man came to shoot him and told me to kiss him goodbye." The driver later had seven points added to his licence and was fined £200. Miss Hill has since seen three post-trauma psychotherapists and says she will never ride again.

Are modern roads becoming increasingly dangerous for riders then? The British Horse Society and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents think so. Roger Vincent of Rospa says that more than half the accidents involving horses happen on quiet

minor roads, not main ones. The British Horse Society says official estimates for the number of accidents on roads involving horses and riders — 3,000 a year, in which 16 riders and more than 100 horses are killed — are nowhere near the real picture.

This is because, until only a week ago — and after BHS pressure — police forces around the country were not obliged to categorise horse-related accidents as a separate statistic. With real figures now replacing "guesstimates", next year's figures could soar unless greater safety awareness can be instilled into drivers and riders.

A combination of factors seem to be making the roads more perilous for riders. There are far more cars on the road:

22 million now, as opposed to 17 million ten years ago. Lesley Billingham, the BHS's director of safety, thinks that cultural changes in the countryside have also contributed. She says: "Many people living in the country come from the town and do not have a country person's understanding of horses. They drive too fast or too close to them and get frustrated at the slightest delay."

Michael Johnson of the AA says: "It is unfair to assume that urban drivers are worse than rural ones, or have any less perception of possible hazards. But some drivers don't realise that a horse is not just another vehicle, but a sensitive, unpredictable animal that can take fright. And riders could do more to make

themselves seen and ensure their signals are understood."

Letters are coming in to the BHS daily from distressed riders who say that caution and road sense have offered them little protection against drivers lacking the same assets. People like Jo Stone, of Okehampton, Devon, who says: "No amount of road safety training helped when a car came straight round a corner and into me and my horse, Tinder, breaking his leg. A vet had to put him down on the roadside."

Although riding is a relatively classless pastime, there are riders now beginning to wonder whether their sport, like so many other traditional country pursuits, will be squeezed out by the modern age.

Safety education campaigns may help. But Mr Vincent of Rospa says there is still no substitute for common sense. He says: "Anyone who goes out on the road should be ready for the worst to happen, and leave themselves enough leeway to stop or react."

Miss Hill remains hopeful. "If just one horse or rider is saved by people reading what happened to me, then my horse won't have died in vain."

For details of the BHS Riding and Road Safety Test write to: The British Horse Society, Stoneleigh Deer Park, Kenilworth, Warwickshire CV8 2XZ (01926 707700).



A hundred horses and 16 riders are killed every year

A BOLT FROM THE BOYS IN BLUE

RECEIVING a speeding ticket in Richmond Park is not unusual. The deer sanctuary is well policed and has strict speed limits. But receiving a ticket for going too fast on a horse was a shock.

The horse in question (which shall remain nameless) had a nice nature, which it never once revealed to me, but which saved it from the knacker's yard when a broken leg ended his promising racing career.

One morning, as we trotted skittishly round the track, his roving eye focused on a crisp packet. He found the sight so horrific that he shot off like an equine cannonball.

Naturally, I made strenuous efforts to apply the brakes, but inadvertently adopted a more aerodynamic posture. At first I was terrified, but after a while, with a clear field ahead, the primal combination of speed, fear and eerie silence was pleasantly refreshing. I began to enjoy myself.

The two officers from the Royal Parks Constabulary mounted patrol were clearly surprised to see a race horse and ill-dressed jockey fly past. Inevitably, they gave chase, but the horse just doubled its efforts. Each time the horse slowed, the police would draw level and then the horse would speed up again.

Eventually, exhaustion took its toll and we came to a standstill. The officers took down my details and wrote a formal warning.



Sorrel Downer: reined in

Penalties for galloping in the Royal Parks range from a warning — which goes on file and serves as a previous conviction should you be caught again — to a summons and court appearance. The penalty depends on whether your horse bolted, or you were just having a good old gallop.

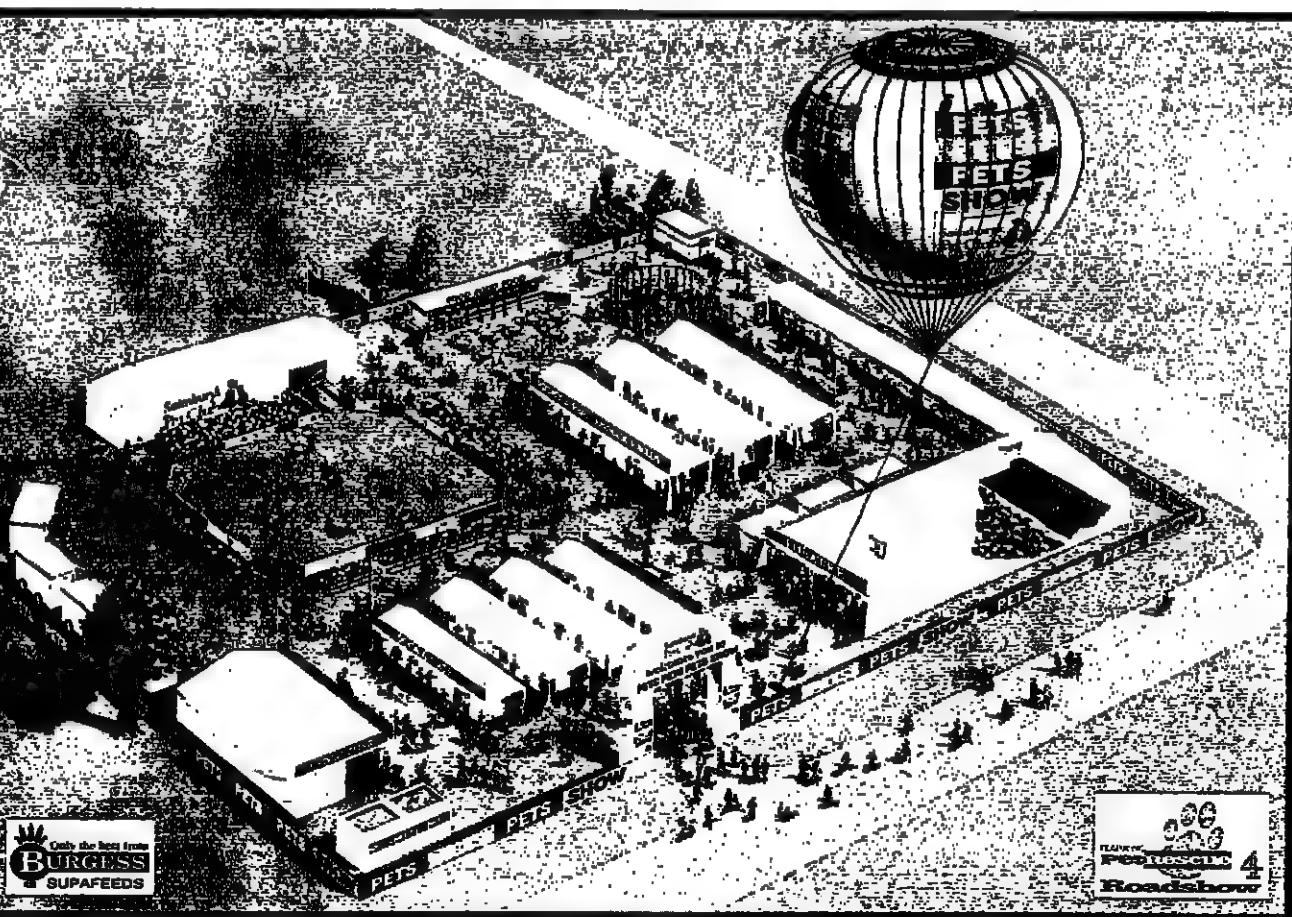
As the WPC assured me: "Someone on a bolting horse looks in a state of panic." I'm safe, I thought. "But you looked like you were enjoying it," she stated. "Well, I was," I answered, perhaps rashly. "I mean, I wasn't. It can be quite exciting really, going so fast." I came away with the impression that all horses have a hidden agenda. Equestrians who think they are in control are being taken for a ride.

SORREL DOWNER

READER OFFER

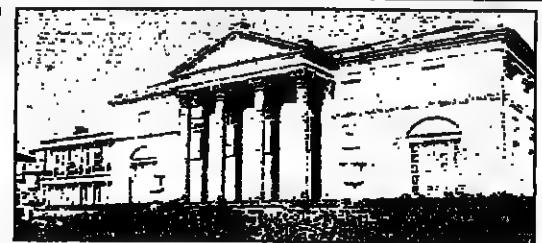
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Today *The Times* invites pet-loving readers to visit *Pets Pets Pets*, a series of five weekend shows in May and June, to be filmed by Channel 4. *Times* readers can purchase a family ticket for five for £12.50 when they book in advance by calling the hotline. You will receive an exclusive goody bag which includes, among other things, a free show guide worth £1 and a coupon which

entitles you to a ten per cent discount on items at the Pet Rescue Stand. In addition, when readers book quoting *The Times* they will be entered into a free prize draw to win five years' supply of pet food from Burgess Supafeeds. The company, founded by the Burgess family in the 17th century, manufactures food for pets from hamsters to horses.

The *Pets Pets Pets* shows, in association

with Sainsbury's Pet Club, will feature an exciting range of events. In the outdoor animal arena the programme ranges from terrier racing, to hawk and eagle flying and sheep dog demonstrations. An indoor theatre will feature sessions on cats' behaviour, dog grooming and how to have healthy rabbits as well as advice about keeping parrots or snakes.

There will also be an animal clinic

where an animal hospital will be recreated, but readers cannot take their own sick pets to be treated.

The television series, to be called *The Pet Rescue Roadshow* will be screened later in the year over 30 weekday evenings on Channel 4. The shows will be hosted by Wendy Turner, presenter of the popular *Pets Rescue* programmes which attract some two million viewers.

I hate it

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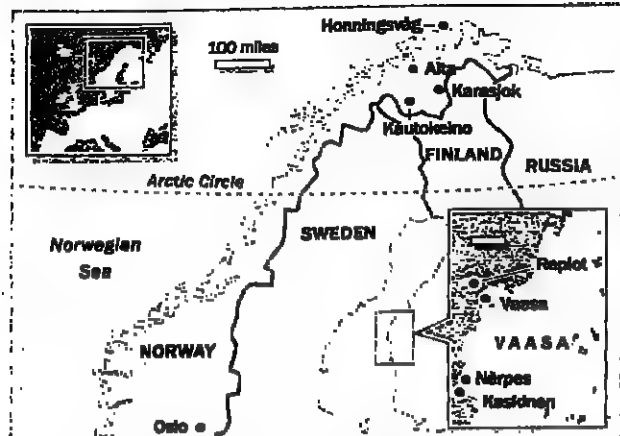
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SCANDINAVIAN FESTIVALS: NORWAY

JOHN BRUNTON

Iceman cometh to the frozen tundra of Norway



Northern Norway, or Finnmark, has lots of snow, but no skiing. There is plenty to drink, but it costs three times what it would in London. The locals are brightly costumed and friendly, but their idea of a sophisticated night out is reindeer racing and suicidal drinking rounded off by a yodelling competition out on the tundra. If you are looking for a winter holiday in spring, it is hard to make the case for Karasjok over Klosters. Après-reindeer's charms, however earthy, are no direct match for the thigh-slapping and schnapps-swigging of an Alpine Easter.

But snow has another side. It is not all chalet girls and whoopee. Though without the drama of mountains, tundra is satisfyingly bleak. In the miles of whiteness north of the Arctic circle, where the only things breaking the monotony are the tree tops poking up through the snow as though they were the antlers of buried reindeer, there is romance.

It can either be a Tolstoyan sort of romance — rich folk wrapped up in furs being sledged along to their expectant winter houses where fires blaze and hogs sizzle — or, for the more melancholy, a secretive romance, where noble folk brood, toil and procreate under thick rugs disturbed only by the sound of icicles crashing from the eaves.

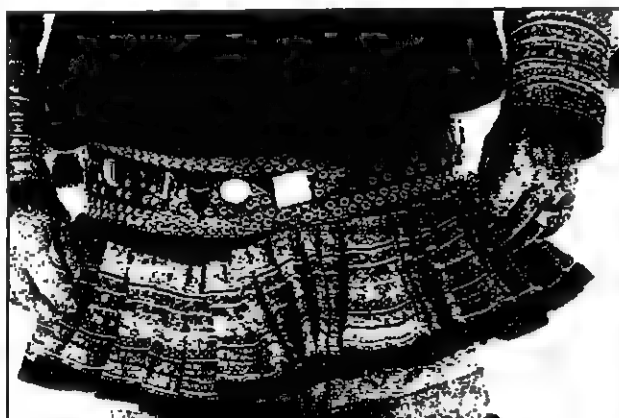
Flying up from Oslo, you see the firds, so massive the Germans could hide their fleet there during both world wars. Alta, the starting point for our tundra jaunt, however, is a sort of Arctic Corby: industrial, cold and best left in a hurry.

A three-hour drive through the frozen wastes, and we arrived in Karasjok, capital of the Sami people, northern Norway's indigenous reindeer herders. The North Cape Hotel was typical of every hotel we were to see. Clean, comfort-

Philip Delves Broughton catches a lift from husky dogs and Rudolf's cousin to get across the snow to the reindeer races



A cold Philip Delves Broughton relaxes on a sled while his four-legged companion works his way across the silent and memorably strange Norwegian tundra



Traditional Sami costume at the Kautokeino race course

able and efficiently heated, it also had an extremely well-appointed sauna, with bracing showers and a room beside the sauna kitted out with sofas and candles for recovering after a good sweat.

Sauna etiquette is a tricky subject, of which one of my companions on the trip foolishly claimed to be the master. As I approached the sauna with my towel wrapped firmly round my waist, he stood there naked and told me to remove it. "I'd prefer to keep it on," I said. "You'll look really stupid in there," he insisted. "They might even make you take it off. Norwegians sauna naked and you'll make them feel self-conscious. It's only polite." I held my ground and we entered the sauna to be met by two Norwegian couples and their four children all sitting there in towels, smirking at my naked friend who covered himself up and scuttled out.

Evenings in Karasjok mean yodelling in the *gamme*, a low wooden building filled with smoky fires and benches, the traditional focus of any Sami village. A yolk is a wordless song, a sort of yodel with more notes. It can last as long as you like and is supposed to describe a mood, person, thing or event, or even a favourite reindeer. Courting Samis

compose them to each other and wait them across the wastes. The great yolkier is as fated among the Sami as Dame Kiri Te Kanawa is among the Maoris.

Mari Boine, the greatest yolkier of the moment, performs jazz-yolk, a fusion genre which is better than it might sound. A pretty, dark-haired woman with heavy mascara, she flirts devastatingly with the Sami men who are, on the whole, trollish and howling from alcohol.

The next morning featured the highlight of the holiday: dog-sledding. We travelled out along a frozen river into the woods to find a collection of



Reindeer skin shoes for sale at the Easter reindeer races

I imagined, involve actually saddling up a reindeer, gripping the antlers and letting rip with a "giddy-up, Rudolph". Instead, you lie face down on a sled which the reindeer then pulls around an oval track. The animals move surprisingly fast, and at the end, the rider must jump off the sled going at full speed.

The then Norwegian Prime Minister, Thorbjørn Jagland, was there, with his family, mingling un-bodyguarded among the crowd before going off for an afternoon of langlauffing. The ubiquitous reindeer stew was served from vans in the skidoo park beside the race track.



A child of the indigenous reindeer herders, the Sami

Easter morning saw the bleary-eyed Samis turning out for church in full costume: bright blue, red and gold jackets, skirts and trousers. Afterwards, they celebrated with reindeer marrow lunches, with cocktail swizzlers provided to poke the marrow out of the bones.

After the claustrophobia of the tundra, it was a relief to head for the sea and Hovingsvåg, an island off the coast whose northern cape is the northernmost point in Europe. An hour on the back of a skidoo takes you to the North Cape Club, a cavernous complex incorporating restaurants, shops and viewing stations looking out across the sea towards the Arctic.

Standing on the supposed most northern point of Europe, however, it is impossible not to miss a spit of land which pokes out a few hundred yards further into the sea.



Samis in Kautokeino, northern Norway

NORWAY FACT FILE

■ Philip Delves Broughton travelled with the Norwegian Tourist Board and SAS Scandinavian Airlines (0345 010789). ■ Getting there: No tour operator offers ready-made packages to the region, although Inntrevel (01653 628811) and Scandinavian Travel Service (0171-559 6666) both offer tailored packages allied to the Easter Festival.

STS also features a ten-day tour of Norway this summer which includes two nights in Tromsø, starting at £938. ■ Going alone: SAS is quoting return fares to Alta, via Oslo, starting at £313 until May 30. Flights from Oslo to Alta get very busy during public holidays as exiles return home.

■ Accommodation: The Rica Cape North Hotel in Karasjok (00 47 7846 7400) costs £1,095 (£88) for a double room including breakfast; at Easter, the half-board price jumps to £125.

The Nordlandia Hotel in Kautokeino (7848 6205) costs £1,145 (£92); £1,510 (£122) at Easter.

■ Extras: Three hours' dog-sledding in Karasjok, £636 (£51), (7846 7166).

Snow-scooter to North Cape, £845 (£69) per person (minimum two people) (7847 2488).

Reindeer safari in Kautokeino, £500 (£41) (7848 5600).

■ What to take: Temperatures in spring hover around freezing. Snowboots and waterproofs are useful for dog sledding and reindeer trips. Thermal underwear is also a good idea.

■ Further information: Norwegian Tourist Board (0171-839 6252).

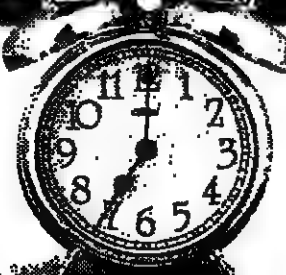
"We do not count that in calculating the most northern point," said our irritated guide without further explanation.

It took several flights in hopper planes to take us back to Oslo, which had seemed slow on our arrival but now looked like New York compared to where we had been.

This had been a very peculiar holiday. The Sami nationalists hope that if they can whip up enough of a tourist industry, they stand a better chance of seceding from the rest of Norway. Unlike the rest of their country, the Samis are mostly in favour of joining the European Union, as membership would cushion their secession with all kinds of subsidies.

Even without the Samis flaunting their ethnicity for political motives, however, their country is physically stunning enough to be worth visiting. It is not twee, Heidi-country, or dramatic and Grieg-worthy, but rather cold, envelopingly silent and memorably strange.

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SCANDINAVIAN FESTIVALS: FINLAND



Children in the town band of Vaasa add to the atmosphere of the Korsholm Festival

My musical magic on a midsummer night

Wood is good for music. As Frans Helmerston's bow gives life to a Bach cello suite, the whole of the upper room at the Stundars open-air museum seems to vibrate softly in sympathy. Of timber construction, as is usual in Ostrobothnia, the Stundars building resonates and enriches the arching melody as if it were itself a huge cello.

Helmerston has been director of the Korsholm Festival since 1994. It makes sense to have a Swede in charge, even though Korsholm is a district of Ostrobothnia in Finland. The area is called (confusingly) the Swedish Coast, and the joint presence of Swedish and Finnish speakers adds to local colour. Each town tailors its road and shop signs to the prevalent language of its community.

Visitors invariably ask whether this causes tension, and the answer is yes, but very little. It is a moot point who was here first (there are conflicting theories as to what constitutes a true Finn). When the lingua franca is music, as it is for a week each June, there is little point in looking for controversy. It makes much more sense to concentrate on great music that is being beautifully played in fascinating surroundings.

Surprisingly, not everyone approves of the Ostrobothnian landscape. Some guidebooks dismiss it as a wasteland and you wonder whether the authors have actually seen it for themselves. Certainly it is flat and dominated by huge, slabby skies but the sense of monotony is averted by mirror-smooth rivers, punctuating birch and fir woodland, amusingly angular hay barns and granite boulders casually strewn as the ice age glaciers departed northwards.

In Britain each sizeable lump of glacial debris would have its own name and a brown sign pointing to it: Dragon Rock, the Witch Stone and suchlike. In this part of Finland, rocks are plentiful

The wooden churches of Ostrobothnia, in Finland, provide the perfect surroundings to listen to some outstanding chamber orchestras, says Brian Hunt



Fishing village on the Ostrobothnian gulf: the coast is littered with ice age rocks

enough to be just rocks. Wood is even more abundantly available and has been for centuries. It is the standard material for all rural structures, from barns to town halls. To the unpractised eye it is hard to tell which buildings are old, which are new, since a spot of remedial carpentry and a lick of traditional red paint renders everything spick and span. Nevertheless, each village seems to have its own open-air museum, a site where old shops and windmills come, plank by plank, to be re-assembled in retirement.

The country churches are wooden, and it is in them that most of the Korsholm Festival concerts take place. Chamber music is the focus; Helmerston's repertory company of string players, wind soloists and pianists mix and match in various combinations to set the timbers ringing.

Musicianship is of a high order, and the programmes combine a large proportion of the familiar and widely loved (Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert and Mendelssohn last year) with a dash of the worth-getting-to-know. A highlight of the last festival was a performance of Schoenberg's string sextet *Verklärte Nacht* (*Transfigured Night*).

In June, every Ostrobothnian night is transfigured. The sun sets, painting the calm sea of the archipelago in pastel tints, but darkness never falls. Ghostly mists blanket the

fields and skirt clumps of woodland, while the sky remains light for the few hours before sunrise. Every Finn wants to make the most of these white nights, having experienced the narrow days and half-light of midwinter, and the Korsholm Festival takes advantage of that enthusiasm. Of the three concerts each day, the last (and often the best) begins at 10pm. One or two concerts on a larger scale take place in the splendid hall in Vaasa, the area's largest town.

Vaasa (Vasa to its 27 per cent Swedish-speaking population) grew up around the medieval castle of Korsholm. The modern town was constructed after Old Vaasa was destroyed by fire. The pipe-smoker who fell



"Poor man" wooden sculpture outside a village church

asleep in a hay-barn in 1852 did the area something of a favour, as the harbour buildings were by then embarrassingly far from the sea. Finland rises out of the water at the rate of about 1cm per year.

Built untypically but understandably of brick and stone, the new Vaasa is rich in museums, markets and art galleries and has the cultural attraction of a university town. You could spend days sampling what it has to offer, but not at the expense of exploring the rest of the Swedish Coast. For example, there is Närpes, a farming district to the south. Distinguished by a dialect that perplexes even its near-neighbours, the village boasts the only "church stables" preserved in Finland. These 19th-century sheds are littered around the 15th-century church and used to shelter the horses and sledges of worshippers.

Further south you come to Kaskinen (Kaskö in Swedish), a pretty island town smaller than the wood pulp factory which provides work for the population of less than 2,000. Lis-Marie Enroth-Niemi, the town's officer of education and culture, invited me into Bladh's House, a pleasantly imaginatively restored 1788 mansion. As we sat chatting I noticed how her head turned to watch each infrequent passing car. It summed up the self-contained nature of the quiet community.

Venturing out into the archipelago is essential, whether you take an extensive cruise or merely the ferry across to Replot, the largest island. Here you will find an extraordinary leaning church: the north wind blew, the timbers bent, and the only economical solution was to stabilise the structure before its wonkiness advanced even further. Stand among the confused and contradictory angles of its interior and you will understand why some parishioners feel distinctly queasy over their Sunday lunch.

If your own internal equilibrium survives, don't leave Replot without feasting on locally caught fish (and visiting the picturesque fishing museum). On the other hand, be sure to be back on the mainland for at least one of the evening's concerts.

When the Korsholm Festival started in the early 1980s,

Finland was still dominated by communist Russia. Many Russian superstars — Yuri Bashmet, Evgeny Kissin, Alfred Schnitke — appeared during the popular directorship of Dmitry Sitkovetsky, the violinist, with the quota of Western artists increasing as the Soviet bear began to loosen its grip. Now, with Helmerston in charge, the cast is international but with an emphasis on young Nordic artists. The week before Korsholm, the same musicians give a festival across the Baltic in Umea, Sweden.

Finland's political past, often painful, sometimes inglorious, is a diminishing presence. For the moment, the highly developed welfare state is keeping heads above water during a difficult time of transition. The Finns I met in and around Vaasa were a great deal more genial and optimistic than some com-

FINLAND FACT FILE

- Brian Hunt travelled with Finnair and the Finnish Tourist Board.
- The 1998 Korsholm Festival runs from June 21 to 27 and features Mozart and Spanish music. Tickets cost between £6.70 and £16.70 for each concert.
- Getting there: Norvika (0171-409 7334), the Finnish-owned tour operator, has two night's B&B at a three-star hotel in Vaasa during the festival for £337, based on two sharing and including return flights. Seven-day fly-drive packages start at £555 per person (minimum two people), including flights and group A car hire. Norvika can book festival tickets. British Airways (0345 322111) has flights to Vaasa from £328 in June.
- Where to stay: Brian Hunt stayed at the Hotel Royal Vaasa (00 358 6 327 811), which has single rooms for £70 and doubles for £84, breakfast included. The Ostrobothnian tourist office in Vaasa (00 358 6 325 1125) has hotel information.
- Tike Mosquito repellent is essential for evenings. It is very light at night, so take an eye mask in case hotel curtains are too thin.
- Reading: *Finland: A Travel Survival Kit* (Lonely Planet, £11.99).
- Information: Finnish Tourist Board (0171-839 4048).

mentators warn you to expect. It was, after all, midsummer and a time for enjoying life: almost 24 hours of sunlight, the mellow best of the year's weather, the pleasures of an unusual landscape and its

rural traditions. How lucky I was to have spent a day in such an atmosphere, and to end it in the twilight listening to Bach. Beethoven and Schubert played magnificently in a wooden church.

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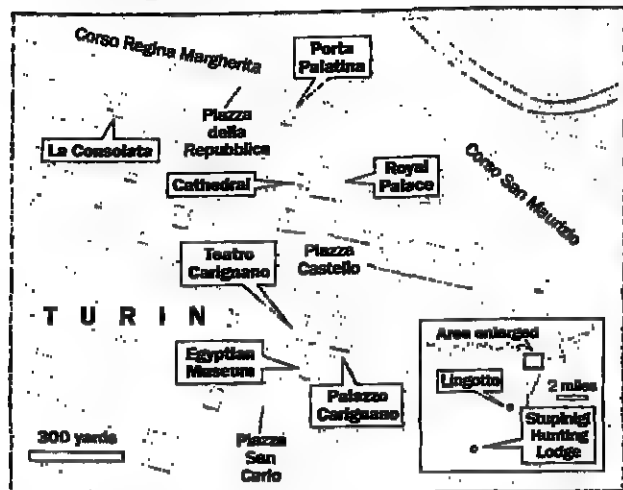
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The Shroud is just one reason to visit Turin, Sean Hignett says. It's also a great place to shop and eat out

Capital city for arcade games



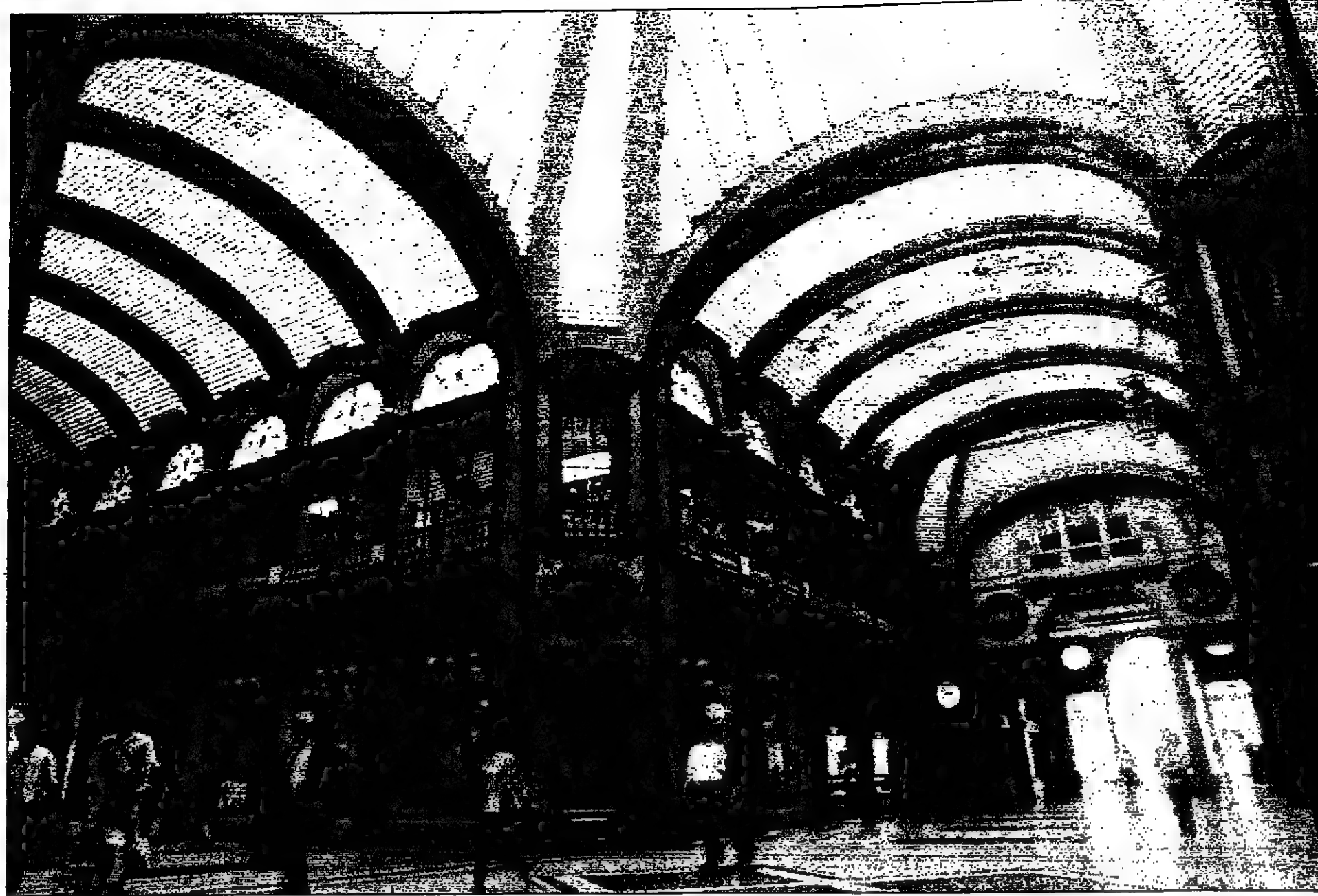
You get the picture the minute you board the Alitalia flight at Gatwick: business class stretches almost the length of the plane. Business is the image Turin has had since flying began. Fiat built its first car here in 1899. In 1923, a year after Mussolini came to power, it built its brutalist Lingotto factory, where the Topolinos, the Mickey Mouse cars, moved up the production line, from floor to floor, till they reached the test track on the roof, the very image of Chaplin's *Modern Times*.

There is, though, another image for which Turin is famous, one that in many ways helped to establish the pre-industrial prestige of a city which, in its 19th-century heyday, remains one of the most stylish in Europe.

The image is that on the Turin Shroud, or *Sindone* as it is called in Italian — the piece of linen that many believe wrapped the body of the crucified Christ, and through some mysterious alchemy came to bear the imprint of

His body. Guarino Guarini, the architect of some of the finest Baroque buildings in the city, built a chapel linking the cathedral to the Royal Palace to house it when the Savoy dynasty bought it from France in 1578, and from 1694 there the Shroud rested, in a casket high above the altar from which it was very occasionally brought out for display. Since being photographed in 1898, when the famous image was discovered, the Shroud has been displayed publicly only three times, in 1931, 1935 and in 1978. This month, to commemorate the centenary of that first photographic revelation, and the fifth century of the Cathedral, it will be on display again.

Maurizio Momo, the architect arranging the centenary display in the nave of Turin Cathedral, stretches out an arm to indicate where the Shroud will be hung, while blocks of 150 visitors, in ranks of three, file past every three minutes — 13 hours equals 50,000 visitors a day, seven days a week. Nearly a million



You don't need an umbrella in Turin — the Galleria San Federico is part of an extensive complex of turn-of-the-century, elegantly arched city-center streets

have already registered for the time-stamped free tickets. "We had a trial run last year with a fake Shroud and we think it will work."

The Cathedral, like many of Turin's churches and monuments, is being refurbished in preparation for the *Esposizione* when, unusually, everything will be open. In the case of the cathedral, though, this is a huge task because exactly a year ago the Holy Shroud survived yet another disaster. On April 11, 1997, Guarini's chapel, in which it had been kept for 300 years, burnt down. By chance — or Divine providence — the chapel was already being restored and the Shroud had been stored behind the High Altar. A fireman braved the flames and falling timbers and

smashed the bullet-proof glass of the reliquary to rescue the Shroud. "Only a miracle can explain how I succeeded," he said.

"The chapel was destroyed," Maurizio Momo confirms. "The dome is all that could be salvaged and that's now supported entirely by scaffolding." "But what..." I ask him. The sentence lades as I gesture towards the ornate altar at the end of the nave on top of which the sacred reliquary appears to be sitting.

"A huge canvas," he says. "The whole end wall is a painting we had made. A *trompe l'oeil*. Didn't you realise it's a very good one, isn't it?"

Trompe l'oeil is something of a speciality in Turin. Stupinigi — the extraordinary

rocco hunting lodge about five miles from the city centre — is full of it. The flat walls of the Room of Perspectives burst out with balconies and balustrades, columns and cornices, all tricks of the painter Alberoni and, high above a corridor leading to the glittering Great Hall, in a small niche, the same artist has faked an exquisitely misleading glimpse of a spiral staircase to another, non-existent, room.

A more modern and tangible metamorphosis befell the Lingotto factory which Fiat abandoned when it moved out to the Mirafiori complex on the city's outskirts, dreary flatlands of industrial development and housing for the thousands of poor southern Italians who migrated north for work in the postwar boom. Half of Lingotto was turned into a conference centre, the rest into a Meridien Hotel — still with the test track on the roof, the riot-proof railings and guard house and still, from the outside, as brutalist as ever. But inside? What's it like to stay in a five-star car factory? Terrific. Big rooms with high ceilings and whole walls of glass, stretching from floor right up to those high ceilings.

This truly aristocratic city even has ceilings out-of-doors: 12 or 15 miles, depending on who you listen to, of elegant turn-of-the-century arcades shelter pedestrians along the grid pattern of its streets. One industry at least that does not flourish in Turin is umbrella-making.

Turin is also a haven of ornate, elegant 19th-century cafés and restaurants where Camillo Cavour and his cohorts plotted the *risorgimento*, the unification of Italy in the 1860s. In Il Cambio, the famous 18th-century restaurant (the name refers to its history as a staging post for changing horses, rather than anything to do with currency) a nameplate marks his table. "Today we've made history," he is reputed to have said in 1860, "now let's have dinner."

Hunger satisfied, Cavour crossed the road to assemble a parliament for the new kingdom in the Palazzo Carignano where, appropriately, its first king, Vittorio Emanuele II, had been born in 1829. The oval hall within the extraordinary curving, undulating brick facade of the palace proved too confined for the 443 deputies arguing over the future of a new country and eventually the parliament moved to Florence and then Rome.

But the history of Italy is still there: the Carignano houses the Museum of the Risorgimento with mementoes of its heroes, including one of Garibaldi's famous red shirts — so famous that in 1862 the *Illustrated London News* was advertising "Ladies' Garibaldi jackets".

Culture and cuisine almost alternate around the Piazza Carignano. Beside Il Cambio is the 18th-century Teatro Carignano, then comes

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF TURIN

■ Getting there: Sean Hignett travelled with Cresta Holidays (0161-927 7000; brochure line 0990 561814), which offers three nights' B&B at the Meridien Lingotto Hotel from £367, based on two people sharing. Including Alitalia flights from Gatwick and transfers. From the Lingotto Hotel to the city centre takes 15 minutes by tram and costs less than 50p, by taxi ten minutes, fare about £4.50.

■ Seeing the Turin Shroud: The shroud will be on display in Turin Cathedral from April 18 to June 14. Entry is free but tickets, which are in great demand (more than 800,000 have been requested already) for a specified date and time must be obtained in advance. Freephone number in Great Britain for tickets and information: 0800 967951 (Italian and English spoken). For a pre-visit briefing and spiritual preparation, the Diocese of Turin has a web-site at <http://sindone.torino.chiesacattolica.it> (in Italian, English and French). Related exhibitions include one devoted to images of the Shroud, from 15th-century paintings and engravings through the 1898 negative photograph to computer-enhanced images. One and two-day tours within the region of Piedmont tracing the Shroud's journey from



The oldest ice cream parlour in Turin

France are also on offer and all the city's historic churches, whether under restoration or not, will be open to the public. The Brothers of the Holy Shroud have a permanent museum at their headquarters, Via S. Domenico 23, which may be visited at any time, entry free.

■ Sightseeing: Stupinigi Palace, open Tues-Sun 9am-12pm, 2pm-5:30pm. Entry £3.50. No 41 bus from C. Vittorio Emanuele. Early mornings are best — you have the place to yourself.

Palazzo Carignano, open Tues-Sat 9am-7pm, Sun 9am-1pm. Egyptian Museum (and the large collection of paintings above it in the Galleria Sabauda) has the same opening hours except Sun 9am-2pm.

Porta Palazzo market, every morning Tues-Fri, all day Sat. There is also a flea market, the Bâlon, on Saturday mornings and a larger one, the Gran Bâlon, on the second Sunday of each month.

It's also worth visiting the Museo dell'Automobile (Corso Unità d'Italia 40) — don't miss the 1929 Isotta Fraschini coupe de ville which Gloria Swanson in drove in *Sunset Boulevard*.

■ Further information: Italian State Tourist Board (0171-408 1254).

original "Antique Formula Carpano" in the equally elegant Barattè e Milano on Piazza Castello.

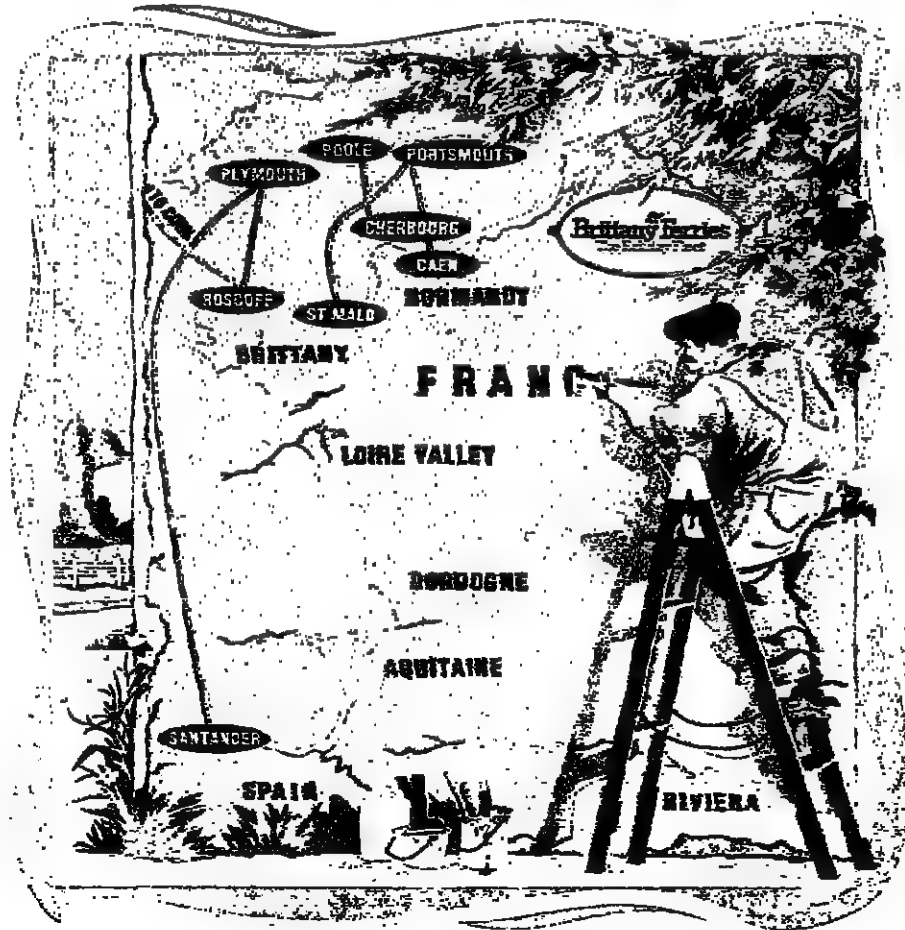
Torinese creativity is not restricted to alcoholic mixtures. They claim to have invented the refining of chocolate, and certainly the Caffè Bicerin (Piazza della Consolata), haunt of Nietzsche, Dumas and Puccini, treats it in a unique way. Its *bicerin* — "something delicious" in Torinese dialect — is a combination of coffee, cream and very thick chocolate that, custom dictates, despite glueing itself to the bottom of the glass, should not be stirred. The café is unusual because traditionally, Turin's cafés were frequented only by men plotting the business or revolution. Bicerin though was always owned and operated by women and, as it is directly opposite Turin's most fashionable church, La

Consolata, ladies hurried to it after communion to break their fast with the quick buzz of the chocolate-coffee combination.

The church, too, is a strange combination. Its interior is lined not just with the gilt and glitter imposed by the architects Guarini and Filippo Juvarra but by hundreds of ex votos, ranging from framed silver epaulettes of soldiers returned safely from battle to "primitive" drawings giving thanks for surviving a gamut of accidents, from falling off a ladder to blowing up the gas stove. At present a side chapel is dedicated to Pier Giorgio Frassati, who is about to be beatified. The first step to becoming a saint. Frassati was editor of *La Stampa*, the daily paper published from Turin. A journalist who becomes a saint? Surely the apotheosis of Torinese creativity.

'We had a trial run with a fake Shroud and we think it will work'

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The Calcutta ad

Castle folly of the man who would be king



William Randolph Hearst, the newspaper magnate, art collector and millionaire, in 1934

W.R. Hearst, the inspiration for *Citizen Kane*, built a huge castle in California. Peter Fairley paid a visit

He called it "my ranch house". His wife called it "your dirty little ranch house". The State of California calls it "his castle". The visitor might be forgiven for calling it "his folly".

Whatever anybody calls Hearst Castle, the place is as charismatic and enigmatic as the man who built it — William Randolph Hearst. Snr, newspaper magnate, hoarder of art treasures, great lover and *bon viveur* and — in turn — pauper and millionaire. It is his monument and this year marks the 40th anniversary of the bequest of the castle to the American nation by the Hearst family.

Remote and mysterious, perched 2,000 ft up in the Californian hills and often above the cloud-line, Hearst Castle is somewhere you can feel the atmosphere and hear the echoes of the past. It is uncanny, almost eerie.

But to appreciate the castle to the full, you need to know something of its creator, whose personality is stamped all over it — as background, I read Hearst's autobiography before going.

Hearst died, aged 88, in 1951. Immortalised by Orson Welles in the film *Citizen Kane*, he once owned not only a publishing empire but also 94 separate businesses, one of the world's largest art collections and seven castles.

His parents — who were self-made millionaires — originally owned the prospecting rights to the land on which Hearst Castle is built, which commands magnificent views of the Pacific on one side, and the craggy, Santa Lucia mountains on the other. As a boy, Hearst and his friends "bagged" the highest part, named it Camp Hill and spent their holidays in tents there.

It was his mother who sparked his interest in castles (among the seven he bought was St. Donat's in Wales), on an 18-month European tour at the age of ten. They explored many ruins and dabbled for hours in antique shops and art galleries. When they reached the Louvre, Hearst (showing early signs of his acquisitive tendencies) asked his mother to buy it for him.

As he grew richer, the desire to possess beautiful objects grew stronger. One European antique dealer sent him a catalogue and asked him to mark anything which might be of interest. "Send me the lot," Hearst replied, with typical panache.

Marble statues, Roman mosaics, Renaissance fireplaces, French cabinets, Mexican armour, Persian rugs, portable Spanish trunk-escritoirs — he collected so many that he had to keep building rooms to display them. Even today, there are basement rooms stuffed full of *objets d'art* still in their packing cases. I asked to see some but was told they were "no go" areas.

Work on the dream castle

HEARST CASTLE FACT FILE

■ Hearst Castle (001 805 927 2020) — 240 miles north of Los Angeles and 220 miles south of San Francisco — is open all year round (Sat to 3.20pm). There are four different tours, lasting roughly two hours each; adults £8.75, children aged 6 to 12, £5.

■ Tour No. 1 includes the entertainment rooms in the main house, the esplanade, gardens and one of the guest cottages. No. 2 shows the upper floors of the main house, including Hearst's private suite, study, library and the kitchen. The third tour shows the suites built in Hearst's final years and includes a video about the Castle's construction. The fourth tour (April to October), shows the gardens, esplanade, guest cottage, swimming-pool dressing rooms and wine cellar.

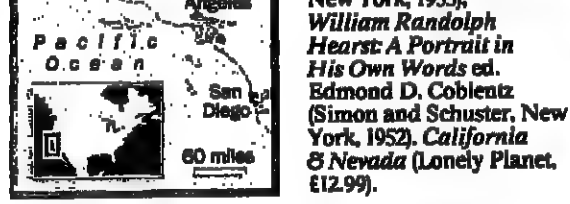
■ Getting there: Virgin Atlantic (01293 747747) has return flights from Heathrow to Los Angeles and San Francisco from £544 until June 10. British Airways (0345 222111) has flights to San Francisco from £441.10 and Los Angeles from £442.90; must be booked three days in advance.

■ Car hire: Holiday Autos (0990 300400) has a week's all-inclusive Group A car hire from Los Angeles airport or San Francisco International Airport for £165.

■ Where to stay: The Cavalier Oceanfront Resort (805 927 4688), a motel in San Simeon, a small town three miles away on the coast, has double rooms from

£60.60 and family rooms (with two double beds and room for cots) from £65.40.

■ Reading: Hunt for out-of-print copies of *William Randolph Hearst: A New Appraisal* by John Kennedy Winkler (Hastings House, New York, 1955); *William Randolph Hearst: A Portrait in His Own Words* ed. Edmond D. Coblentz (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1952); *California & Nevada* (Lonely Planet, £12.99).



started in 1919, when Hearst was 56. He squandered millions on it, as if to create one perfection in an otherwise imperfect life. But Millicent, his wife, loathed it and withdrew to New York, leaving the way clear for him to install his mistress — the beautiful Hollywood film star Marion Davies — in what is still called the Celestial Suite.

It has two bedrooms, neither of which Hearst spent much time in. With 94 different businesses to run, he regarded sleep as "a waste of time", normally getting by on four to five hours a night.

Evidence of his workaholicism is that the castle and grounds are inundated with telephones — 130 of them — by beds, baths, swimming pools, behind statues and under trees. Every one is an Art Deco gem. I picked a handset up by a rhododendron bush. To my amazement, a gruff voice said: "Please put the phone down."

W.R.H. was an active journalist for 66 years, owning 26 newspapers, 14 magazines, five news services, 11 radio stations and one movie company. Many of his publications, including *Good Housekeeping*, still hang from the reading racks in his study. His fascination for descriptive writing extended to tapestries: nearly every room contains a tapestry, some measuring 35 ft by 12 ft.

"To Hearst, tapestries told stories before newsprint," our guide Mathilda, a relative of one of the old family retainers, explained. "He used to call them 'my back numbers department'."

The dream took shape over 27 years under the imaginative direction of Julia Morgan, a San Francisco architect. "Hearst would cable ideas to her, sometimes three times a day," she explained.

The result is an incongruous mixture of Spanish and Italian styles, collectively described as "Mediterranean Revival" in the tourist brochures. Dominating everything is the four-



Hearst Castle's palatial dining room, still set for 40 guests

storey Casa Grande, looking, with its tiered bell towers, like a piece of Disney World, with three lavishly furnished guesthouses — Casa del Mar, Casa del Monte and Casa del Sol — clustered around it.

To these, the luggage of up to 40 weekend guests at a time was humped by a retinue of servants; while its owners — darlings of the movies, powerful men from Washington, executives of Hearst publications, adventurers, explorers, relatives and friends — rushed off to be greeted by their affable hosts, Marion and "Pops", as Hearst was affectionately nicknamed. (Today, bags and cameras have to be left at the bottom of the hill.)

The visitors' book makes fascinating reading. Among scores of famous names, I spotted Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin, Winston Churchill, Bing Crosby, Cary Grant, David Niven and Walt Disney.

The house parties were legendary and the relics remain on view — spare shorts, shoes and tennis rackets, swimming costumes, jodhpurs and crops — even musical instruments for the hill-billy sessions which W.R.H. sometimes

Hearst golf plans hit a bunker

WILLIAM Randolph Hearst was one of the most powerful men of his time, but his successors are struggling to match his influence. Tom Chesshyre writes.

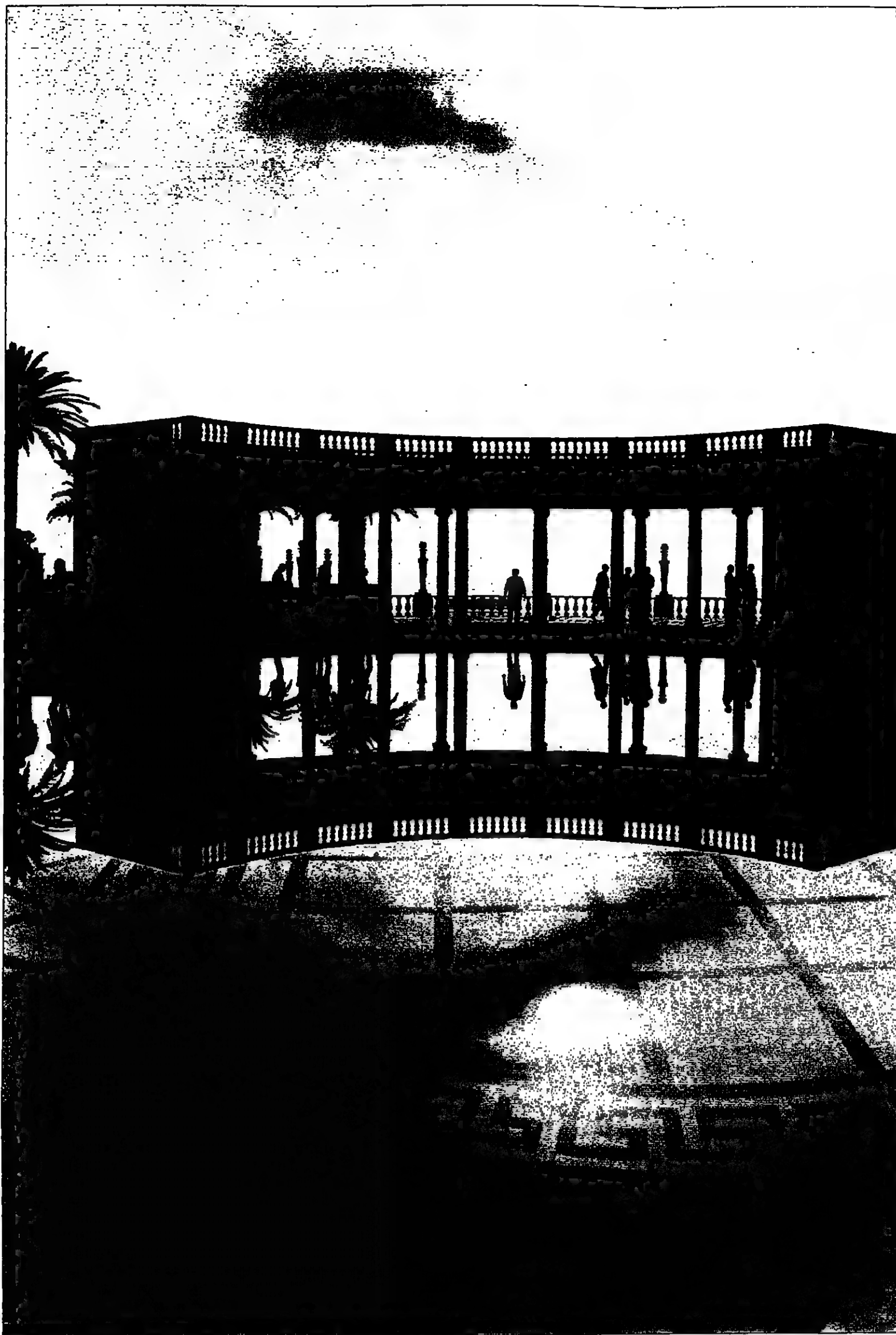
The Hearst Corporation — which is partly run by Hearst family heirs — has had plans to build hotels, shops, restaurants and a golf course in and around San Simeon, the closest town to Hearst Castle, rejected by the Californian Coastal Commission.

Environmentalists, who argued that a resort would ruin one of the last unspoiled stretches of coastline between Los Angeles and San Francisco, persuaded the Commission to block the development. Limits on the amount of land that can be developed for housing in the area were also put in place, and measures to protect local wildlife (including elephant seals, steelhead trout and red-legged frogs), as well as a block on any widening of the two-lane main road along the coast.

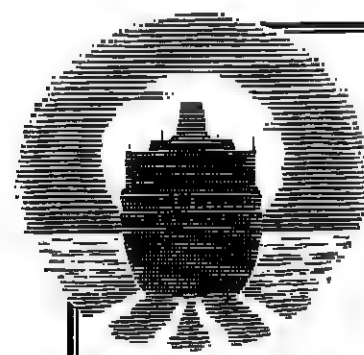
The Commission will only allow a 375-room hotel, without a golf course — the linchpin to the Hearst development plans in San Simeon.

A spokesman for the Sierra Club, an environmental protection group, said: "We were very pleased with the Commission's decision."

The Hearst Corporation is considering an appeal.



The Neptune pool in the castle Hearst started building in 1919 when he was 56. At 2,000 ft, it has views of the Pacific and the Santa Lucia mountains



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SKI WEEKENDS: END OF TERM REPORT

Go straight to the top of the class



After four seasons, carving skis (shown here) dominate the shops and the slopes, but Britons must make more effort to master them. Overall, this season has been excellent on the slopes of North America but not so great in the Alps

In the Alps it was at best a C season, with snow coming too little and too late for the kind of deep-powder early skiing we so enjoyed last season. Off-piste skiing gets low marks, though there were a few high points — mid-January's metre-plus downfalls, for example.

Overall, France and Italy had significantly better snow conditions throughout the season than Switzerland or Austria. All-night snow-grooming and investment in snow-making kept most pistes open in the more diligent resorts. But by early spring many south-facing exposures were bare and runs down to resort villages, particularly in Austria, were thinly covered and icy for much of the winter.

In North America, the El Niño phenomenon played out as predicted. Conditions there were far superior to those in the Alps, rating a solid B.



DOUG SAGER

Our ski correspondent gives his verdict on the best — and worst — of the ski season, and suggests where we will go and how we will be skiing next year

California, where Mammoth Mountain measured more than 600cm of snow, deserves an A. Colorado got only half the snow it received last year, but still deserves a B+. Canada had a B+ season overall.

With mountain-top video cameras broadcasting undistorted images over the Internet, snow reporting achieved new immediacy. Of our two free Internet snow-reporting services, I give the Ski

Club of Great Britain (<http://www.skiclub.co.uk>) a B- and Ski Hotline (<http://www.skihotline.com>) a B+. The Ski Club gets extra credit for its recent statistics on snow depths. But Ski Hotline is faster, more comprehensive and easier to navigate.

RESORTS

THERE were more than 100 new additions to tour operator

brochures this season (although most of them were already familiar to the skiing public). One new face, Ste-Foy, and the firm with which it made its debut, The Ski Company (acknowledged as leader of the damn-the-expense chalet companies pack) is shortly merging with Meriski, the Méribel chalet specialist, under the umbrella of Brown Rock whose owners also own the Dick's Tea-Bar nightclub chain.

Just 20 minutes away from Val d'Isère, Ste-Foy is a tiny hamlet ideal for families, good for day trips to other ski areas in the French Tarentaise, and an off-piste powder playground suitable for intermediates and experts. The Yellowstone Chalet at Ste-Foy is the loveliest I have seen anywhere in the Alps.

Full marks to Crystal for its bravery in introducing the hard-core, off-piste cult resort of Alagna into a mainstream brochure. But Alagna fails miserably in terms of accommodation, access to nearby Gressoney, and the general unsuitability of its skiing for anyone who is not an experienced mountaineer.

Extra points again to Crystal for launching helicopter skiing packages in the former Soviet Union. Unfortunately, Gudauri — an outpost in the Caucasus mountains of Georgia — turned out to be a nightmare for a colleague who said the electricity was intermittent, as were the helicopters, and the guides took the party into an avalanche.

A solid A goes to Frontier Ski, a small firm specialising in Canadian action holidays, and its new resort, Fernie. Long neglected, Fernie will be featured in next season's Inghams brochure. Fernie's success is down to its snow — as much as 10 metres deep and unusually light and fluffy. I have put it at the top of my list for must-tries next season.

TOOLS

SOME students stubbornly refuse to adapt to new technology. Four seasons on, carving skis overwhelmingly dominate the shops and the slopes.



All-night snow-making and grooming kept most resorts open in a bad season

Even specialist telemark and deep powder skis now appear with the broad tip and narrow waist. Britons must try harder at changing from the old-fashioned all-sliding technique to carving more precise turns. They should find out which of the new shapes is most suitable and then relearn the simple tricks of skiing on the edges.

OPERATORS

MAINSTREAM tour operators succeeded so well with the debut of direct charter flights to Denver this season that BA will start its own scheduled Denver service from June 1. Charter flights this winter got me to Denver hours ahead of any scheduled airline (and on time for onward connections to other American resort airports).

Among mainstream tour operators, Thomson deserves to go to the head of the class for effort alone. It is the only firm to offer free packed lunches in all resorts, the only brochure to include independent accommodation and resort appraisals from *The Good Skiing and Snowboarding Guide* (Which? Books, £15.99) — and from holiday-makers themselves.

Verbiere deserves bonus marks for its successful efforts to hold together the unravelling Four Valleys ski pass network, coming up with a package which gives skiers more resorts and more skiing terrain (410km). It also announced the most eagerly awaited new ski lift in the Alps, an eight-person telecabine which will cut waiting time in the popular Tignes sector. This lift should open next Christmas.

The Eurostar ski train service from London Waterloo to Moutiers and on to Bourg-St-Maurice was a hit with many skiers. But only 30 per cent of all tickets were available to the general public, as opposed to the tour operators. The train also disappoints by rushing past more northerly French resorts like Chamonix, and is useless for southern resorts such as Alpe d'Huez and Les Deux Alpes. Eurostar says it will decide about more seats and routes within the next few weeks.

DUNCES

FRENCH ski teachers go to the bottom of the class. The ESF (Ecole du Ski Français) this season forced an end to tour operators' free piste-guid-

than usual temperatures in Europe and powder snowfalls in North America. Booking now, even before most brochures come out, is a good idea — especially if you know where and when you want to go. Some of the best chalet accommodation has already been reserved for Christmas and half-term holidays.

The bigger brochures have already been launched. Thomson rewards early bookers with £25 off every ski holiday purchased before the end of April. Crystal advertises savings of up to £200 per couple on selected holidays, valid to the end of May. First Choice is offering Glasgow, Newcastle and Birmingham departures for the price of Gatwick on bookings made before April 14.

High marks go to Crystal and Inghams, the only mainstream operators to offer full off-piste and helicopter skiing cover in their insurance packages. Thomson does cover off-piste but not helicopter skiing. Airtours is typical of the other operators, saying nothing in the brochure about off-piste or helicopter skiing cover, merely advising customers to ring up first if they intend doing anything "hazardous" on holiday.

Several operators offer free accommodation for children during selected weeks. Inghams and Crystal offer free insurance for children up to 18. Thomson for children between two and 16. First Choice is introducing Friday-night flights from Gatwick to Lyons, with an extra half-day's skiing for those headed to Les Deux Alpes, Val d'Isère and Les Menuires at a reduced price because of the evening flight.

PREVIEW

FORECASTERS predict an excellent snow season ahead as El Niño gives way to a sister weather phenomenon, La Niña, which promises colder

Crystal (0181-399 5144); Inghams (0181-780 4444); First Choice (0800 7542754); Thomson (0990 333333); Airtours (0870 577755); Frontier (0181-776 8709); The Ski Company (0171-730 9600 until end April); Eurostar (0345 303020).

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Mammoth Mountain, in California, had more than 600cm of snow this winter

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A blind sausage-tasting in the kitchen establishes that the variety being served is still the best. The writer, second from right, gives his opinion

Anthea Lawson finds the best last-minute departures on offer



including dinner and full English breakfast.

THE ACTIVE can opt for a weekend break this spring at the Nuffield Priory country house hotel in Surrey, which has organised special deals with the Aqua Sports Country Club next door. Individual watersports tuition is available at concessionary prices for hotel guests. A two night break costs from £59 per person per night. For more information call 01737 822066.

GET SOME fresh spring air in your lungs on a Mediterranean walking holiday with Waymark (01753 516477). Places are available on April 26 at Quatretondeta in Spain, where seven days' walking through olive groves, limestone hills and Moorish ruins will cost £435 including half-board, flights and taxes. From May 2 you can spend a week exploring at Kas in Turkey for £575, walking to famous archaeological remains through mountains and coastal villages.

MOSWIN (0116-271 9922) is offering savings of up to £105 on city breaks in Budapest. Until June, a two-night stay at the five-star Kempinski Hotel costs £399 per person including flight from Heathrow and half board. Two nights at the four-star K&K Hotel Opera will cost £311 per person.

FOR THOSE wishing to travel further afield for their spring break, Qantas Holidays (0900 673464) has reduced its seven-night packages to Bali from £589 to £499 until April 30. Return flights from Heathrow leave five days a week; the price also includes transfers, taxes, and seven nights at the Puri Santrian Hotel. Extra nights cost £23.

TRIPS to Singapore are half price until April 30 with Asan Explorer (01481 823417). Three nights' accommodation in a first-class hotel, scheduled flights and a city tour are reduced from £899 per person to £425. Extra nights for £19.

A RELAXING two-night break at the Warpool Court Hotel in St Davids on the Pembrokeshire coast is available from Sunvil UK (0181-232 9788) for £157 per person.

AUSTRAL (0171-734 7755) is offering bargains on single and return flights to Sydney departing from London on April 21 and 28. One-way with Airtrics costs only £149; returns are available until the end of June on Japan Airlines for £399, including one night's accommodation in Tokyo.

MEON Villas (01730 268411) has savings of up to £176 on self-catering holidays in Corfu departing May 4 and 11. One week in an apartment



Visit the famous fiestas in Seville on a cruise trip

or private villa based on four sharing costs £199 per person, including return flights from Gatwick or Manchester, transfers, and maid service. On some of the deals, car-hire with unlimited mileage is included.

LAST-MINUTE Mediterranean cruise bargains are on offer from Festival Cruises (0171-436 0827). The Bolero sails from Italy on April 27 for ten nights to destinations in Greece and Turkey, costing from £585 per person; the Flamingo sails on April 30 to Turkey, Israel and the Greek Islands, from £765 per person. Prices include flights from Heathrow, full board, daytime activities and evening entertainment. Port charges of around £90 not included.

It's all in a (long) day's work

What makes a great hotel? Determined to discover the trade secrets, Michael Freedland becomes manager, for a day, at the Lygon Arms

Try to imagine the moment when the boy who wanted to be an engine driver rode on the footplate, or when the kid who yearned to play for Arsenal scored the winning goal.

I had always wondered what it would be like to run a hotel: what was behind those doors marked "private"? What goes on in the kitchen? What do the chamber staff get up to? Would it really be as manic as it is in *Fawlty Towers* and *By-on-the-wall* TV documentaries like the BBC's recent *Hotel*?

So I contacted the five-star Lygon Arms at Broadway, probably the most beautiful village in the heart of the Cotswolds. They were game and decided to give me a (supervised) go at being manager for a day.

I was being dropped in the deep end. The Lygon Arms isn't just any old hotel. It is part of the Savoy Group and takes between £10,000 and £40,000 a day — many of the regular guests are celebrities.

It is also steeped in history; it figured in the Civil War and includes a staircase down which Charles I was said to have fled — almost every floorboard creaks with history. There is said to be a Lygon ghost, rumoured to be either Charles I with his head tucked underneath his arm or Oliver Cromwell, who was once a guest and has a suite named in his honour.

I was taking the place of Kirk Ritchie, the 48-year-old managing director and general manager of the Lygon for 20 years. A little daunted by my total lack of experience, I set to work, not knowing what to expect.

8.03am: Read the papers to see if the stock market is doing well — there is normally a rush of bookings if prices are up. There is a race meeting at Cheltenham (15 miles away) coming up soon, so I make sure there is enough wine in stock — the most expensive bottle in the hotel costs £750. It is the manager's duty to



The Lygon Arms is set in Cotswold countryside; Michael Freedland selects a new champagne for the hotel



LYGON ARMS FACT FILE

Michael Freedland was a guest of the Lygon Arms, Broadway, Wores WR12 7DU (01386 852255). Single rooms are from £105 a night, doubles from £165, and the Charles I suite (with four-poster bed) is £375 — continental breakfasts included.

■ The Lygon Arms is offering a specially priced package for *Times* readers who mention this article. Two nights in a double or twin room is £230 per person, based on two sharing, including a bottle of champagne, evening meals and breakfast. Offer runs until May 8 (excluding the Bank Holiday weekend, May 1-4).

■ Guests have use of the country club, although there are charges for massages or beauty treatments. There is also a floodlit tennis court and a billiard room.

■ Broadway is in the heart of the Cotswolds, a half hour drive from Oxford, 36 miles away. It nestles between the Malvern Hills and the Vale of Evesham and is 90 miles from London.

10.07am: The kitchen. It's sausage testing time. Someone has complained that the breakfast sausages are too spicy, so ten varieties have been prepared by the hotel's butchers for a blind trial. Finally, everyone agrees that plate ten is the best — succulent, tasty. "That's the one we serve at the moment," says Roger Narbett, the head chef, somewhat self-satisfied.

11am: The tasting took longer than expected. The hotel has to be looked over. I discover there are three walking speeds — fast, very fast and hotel manager's pace, which is very fast indeed. As we rush around, however, there is still time to rearrange a cushion or two in the spacious Russell room, a lounge with a wonderful roaring log fire.

Then on to the country club — a vast complex dominated by the indoor pool but with beauty salon, massage, steam and sauna rooms and health club. I put some plastic covers over my shoes so I can walk to the side of the pool and chat to one of the swimmers. He is a local who is a member of the club — he tells me how much he loves the countryside around Broadway.

11.26am: Sales meeting. There are still 89 rooms to sell in January and 214 in February. James Partridge, the conference manager, mentions a society wedding in June — the family has put the Lygon on their list of hotels for guests. "That's going to be the big wedding this year," says Kirk. **11.48am:** Check the rooms currently being refurbished. A couple coming for the Cheltenham races always demand Room 52. I tell the builders it must be ready in time. The foreman wants approval for the colour to be used in the bathrooms. "Yellow or blue?" he asks. I suggest blue, but the shade is wrong. He promises to produce a sample that afternoon.

12.35pm: Another meeting, this time to discuss another restaurant problem. People are booking for Sunday lunch and not turning up. Take a credit card number, I suggest. We agree on a £10 charge per person for those who don't show.

Jeffrey tells me that Lord and Lady H were in for lunch on Saturday. "Still ordering eggs and chips?" asks Kirk. "Not this time, but they always want something that is not on the menu," is the reply.

1.14pm: Lunch in front of the log fire in the Russell room — a plate of healthy smoked

salmon. While we sit and ponder I say I find it difficult to put out the lights in bedrooms and suggest there should be one central switch. (By the way, the Lygon gets through 4,000 light-bulbs, 30,000 bars of soap, 700 kilos of smoked salmon and 140 tons of logs for those fireplaces each year.)

1.47pm: Welcome guests in the car-park. One woman has two little dogs on a lead. I inform her that there are two baskets in her room with two bowls at the foot of each, one for water, one for the best dog food in Worcestershire. There is also a supply of dog biscuits and cheese drops.

2pm: Inspect the new carpet in the staff quarters. I'm told the staff like the blue shade. I approve it. Beginning to feel quite tired.

2.35pm: I have to choose the skirt material for the receptionists' uniforms (whatever next!). Should it be grey, brown or blue? I plump for the grey. The French receptionist Celine beams. She thinks it was a good choice.

The decorator rejoins us. He has found a new blue shade for the bathroom paint. That's better, I say. We'll go for that. **3pm:** A meeting to welcome new staff in one of our conference suites. We tell them — the new linen porter, the receptionist, the new driver, the kitchen helper on work experience — to relax and remember that they are representatives of the Lygon. Always pick up litter, open doors for guests, who must be addressed by name. "When they come up to you, the answer is always 'yes'," says Kirk (who is "shadowing" me).

4.35pm: I am beginning to wilt. So Maggie, my secretary, serves me tea (Darjeeling). There are still more staff to see, more phone calls to make, more purchasing orders to approve.

5.15pm: Welcome more guests. Check Mrs G's summer pudding is being remembered. **5.45pm:** A chimney is blocked in one of the lounges. A new lining may be necessary, which could be costly. Decide to find out whether it would be more sensible to have a gas fire installed instead.

6.15pm: Supplier brings in a new sparkling wine, Pelorus 1993 from Cloudy Bay, New Zealand. We visit the cellar. It is lined with bottles — and jars of things such as cranberry juice — and is the perfect place to try wine. By this time, any place is a good place to taste wine. I drink a sample and give my approval.

7pm: Another tour of the hotel. Curtains need to be closed more neatly. Shocked to discover lights on in empty rooms.

7.35pm: Finally off-duty. Have dinner with Kirk. I offer him his job back and he is delighted to accept. I am glad he does — I was not reduced to Basil Fawlty levels of frustration and despair, but it had been an exhausting day. My hotel manager dreams had been more than fully satisfied.

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AROUND THE WORLD A WEEKEND GUIDE

TRAVEL TIPS by Jill Crawshaw

TRAVEL JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR



Dolphin discoveries

THERE IS a good chance of seeing the common, bottlenose and striped dolphins in their natural habitat during the three-night Dolphin Watch holiday off Gibraltar that is being offered by Discover the World (01737 218801).

This is definitely not a staged performance. If you are lucky, you may be able to see schools of up to 100 common dolphins performing in the wild.

The price of £359 (£416 from May to September) includes flights, B&B hotel accommodation and two mornings' excursions on a 30-foot catamaran.



Exhilarating sight of bottlenose dolphins leaping out of the sea

Wedding days

WHY NOT tie the knot in a really impressive, not to say over-the-top, way and get married in Las Vegas? Virgin Holidays (01293 617181) will take care of the red tape for £235-£575 depending on the style of your nuptials.

Among the many extravagant options on offer are: Weddings with Elvis, where a look-alike will rock you down the aisle; a Wedding on Wheels where the minister will perform the ceremony in the (borrowed) limousine; and a Drive-in Wedding where you pull up the hatch, ring the heart-shaped bell and hand over your credit card.

A week's Las Vegas holiday with Virgin, which includes flights to Los Angeles, car hire and four-star room-only hotel accommodation, costs £519.

SHOP TILL you drop during a short break in Hong Kong. Kooni (01306 740500) has three-night breaks in May at hotels within reach of acres of the huge shopping malls, from £375-£415. Make sure you also visit the Jade Market near Nathan Road (real jade makes your tongue go numb, apparently). Stanley Market, a No 6 bus ride from Hong Kong Island's waterfront, for leisure wear and shoes. The Laues for designer label copies, and factory outlets for originals at bargain prices. However, do remember that our duty-free allowance is only £145 — and that British Customs knows exactly when the flights from Hong Kong arrive back here.

Mud massage

CLINGFILM yourself in seaweed, soak in sulphur springs or wallow in the mud on a spa break: specialist Enna Low (0171-584 2841) offers a wide selection.

A four-day thalassotherapy break at Thalazur near Antibes includes three days of treatments (seaweed packs, sea-water mas-



Like Nicolas Cage and Sarah Jessica Parker in *Honeymoon in Vegas*, you can rock down the aisle with Elvis lookalikes in attendance, organised by Virgin Holidays

sage) and three nights' half-board hotel accommodation as well as flights, for £559.

The Grand Hotel Trieste and Victoria in Abano, Italy, specialises in treatments using mud renowned since ancient times for its therapeutic and regenerating effects. The price of £645 covers flights, three nights' accommodation with full board, medical consultation, two sessions of mud application and ozone thermal bath, plus full body massage.

If at any time you feel a sudden need to escape, Venice is only 90 minutes away.

French larder

PLUNDER the best market in northern France that spills all over and around Dieppe's Grande Rue.

With its hinterland known as the larder of Paris, the Grande Rue is a monument to gluttony with stalls of Normandy cheeses, the pungent local Neuchâtel, Pont L'Évêque and Camembert, tripe, terrines, andouillettes and, near the harbour, marble slabs of crab, whelks, cockles, soles and sea bass.

Choose from the 30 ice-creams or 17 teas at the Duchesse de Berry pâtisserie, and join the ghosts of Oscar Wilde and Impressionist painters at the Café des Tribunaux over a coffee break. There is even a Mammouth supermarket in Dieppe, but who needs it?

P&O European Ferry Holidays (01992 456049) offers four nights for the price of three from May to September. Prices start at £144 per person based on two travelling on the four-hour Newhaven-Dieppe

ferry crossing. £126 per person based on four in a car. These prices include B&B at the Hotel Churchill; add £22 for travel on the faster Lynx catamaran, a two-hour 15-minute crossing.

It's so surreal

HERE IS the chance to decide whether you love him or loathe him: more than 200 works of former wallpaper

designer turned surrealist painter Magritte (1898-1967) are on view at his centenary exhibition in Brussels until June 28. Kikker Holidays (0171-231 3333) will organise tickets and offer advice on shop-

ping and eating in the Belgian capital. Two-night Brussels breaks cost from £228-£274 which includes travel by Eurostar or by air, B&B in a four-star hotel, car transfer and entrance fees.

PLUNGE into the Red Sea off Agaba in Jordan on a mini-diving safari with Red Sea Holidays (01353 778096). For £499 during May, you get flights, five nights' hotel B&B and three days' diving (six dives) with the Royal Diving Centre. It is dangerous to dive on the day before you fly, so head off to Wadi Rum or Petra instead.

Time to tee off

SWING in France on a spring golf break with BDH Golf (0181-644

1225) which has a selection of packages in Brittany. These include Golf de l'Odéon near Bénodet staying in cottages overlooking the course. Prices in early May are £70 per person for each of six people for a week's self-catering, £100 for each of four. A five-day golf pass to play l'Odéon and another eight local courses costs £94 each. You could also stay two nights at the family-run Auberge Armor Vlainne near the championship course of St Laurent. B&B and dinner are included in the price of £105 per person; a three-day golf pass for playing on nine courses is £50.50; all prices include Le Shuttle fare for car and passengers.

Travel articles in The Times since last January are on our Internet site. See "Most Recent" links on <http://www.the-times.co.uk>

Lost City man 'finds' Atlantis

HISTORIANS may be divided over the site of the mythical kingdom of Atlantis. They may even dispute whether it existed at all.

But maverick South African businessman Sol Kerzner — who built a "Lost City" resort near Johannesburg — has no doubts — it is just off Paradise Island in the Bahamas, and conveniently near a great swathe of land which he happens to own.

So enamoured is Mr Kerzner of Atlantis that he recreated it once in 1994, complete with three-million-gallon aquarium and 13,000 fish. And now he is doing it again, on an even larger scale. "Atlantis was just off the coast here," he said. "The governor-general's wife came for tea one day and she told me so."

Wherever Atlantis was — Plato described it "plunging into the sea" four centuries before Christ — its namesake has made huge profits for Mr Kerzner's company, Sun International. Fired by this success, he is now building the £280-million Royal Towers — in reality Atlantis II, across the lagoon from Atlantis I.

The architecture, a cross between New York's Grand Central Station and St Paul's,

Paradise Island is to house a "jungle baroque" resort for the super-rich, says Mary Gold

could be described as jungle baroque. At the heart of it is a 70ft atrium, decorated with enormous gold scallop shells, beneath which the ground floor will be submerged under eight million gallons of water to house sharks, barracuda and manta rays.

There will even be "ruins of Atlantis", an underground village viewed through glass and inhabited only by eels and piranhas.

The most eye-catching feature, especially for younger guests, is outside — a 60ft-high replica of a Mayan temple with five water slides, including the almost-vertical kamikaze slide which propels swimmers into a clear tunnel running through a shark-filled lagoon. There will also be waterfalls, fountains and a

seven-acre snorkelling lagoon stocked with tropical fish.

The architect is Jim Bocher, an American who worked on Canary Wharf in London. When asked why the design included a Mayan temple he said: "The good thing about Atlantis is that you can take liberties with it."

His pride and joy is the Imperial Suite, suspended between two towers and designed with royalty and the super-rich in mind.

Steve Kaiser, the marine adviser, dismissed suggestions that a man-made lagoon was not the ideal place for so many fish. "Atlantis is a great place for them. The sharks had six babies last year, that's how happy they are."

Mr Kerzner says he is not trying to compete with Disney. "There won't be any queuing here," he says. But he won't be swimming in any of the pools, shark-infested or otherwise. "I can swim but I don't," he says. "There just isn't time."

Royal Towers will open on December 22. Book from July through British Airways Holidays (01293 723161) or Virgin Holidays (01293 617181). Eight nights at Atlantis with BA Holidays, including flights and room-only accommodation, cost from £869 per person.

Rival operators' battle means more perks for passengers, reports Tom Chesshyre



More legroom aboard aircraft, just like the old days, is Thomson's latest offer

High fliers up the stakes

BRITAIN'S "big two" tour operators — Thomson and Airtours — are battling to attract customers by offering a greater choice of in-flight service as well as loyalty schemes. The latest move came this week when Thomson, Britain's largest operator, announced a new seating system, to be introduced in summer 1999, allowing passengers to opt for up to 50 per cent more legroom on long-haul flights.

There will be three different classes of seats — "360 Premium", "360 Extra" and the standard "360". The "360 Premium" seats, which cost £120 more per return flight than standard seats, will be wider, with 50 per cent more legroom, priority boarding, complimentary drinks and a free travel pack (including an inflatable neck pillow, toothbrush and eye mask).

Thomson recently announced that it will offer holiday discounts of ten per cent and free upgrades to initial shareholders, who will become members of the Founders' Club when the company is floated on the stock exchange next month.

Meanwhile, the second biggest operator, Airtours, has launched "Airtours Freedom", a customer-loyalty programme. It offers a free discount card that can be used at 25,000 retail and holiday outlets, as well as a low-cost credit card.

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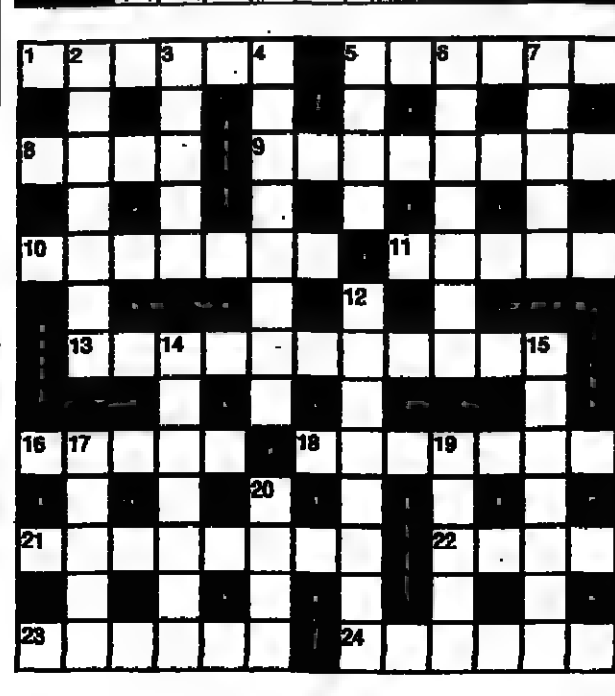
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No 1377

ACROSS

- 1 Six feet: get to understand (6)
- 5 Adjust, alter (6)
- 8 (Great) size; majority (of) (4)
- 9 Flood rescue vessel (5,3)
- 10 Wander off point (7)
- 11 Lusty, goat-like god (5)
- 13 One whose children have left home (5-6)
- 16 A drink: fat (5)
- 18 Trap (to fall into) (7)
- 21 Unemotional type (4,4)
- 22 Fruit: take out (girl) (4)
- 23 Vigour (6)
- 24 Relaxation, rest (6)

DOWN

- 2 Foul-mouthed (7)
- 3 Long-distance walker (5)
- 4 (See in) imagination (5,3)
- 5 Defensive water (4)
- 6 Aloof; far away (7)
- 7 A raid (5)
- 12 Make sense of (code) (6)
- 14 Rob, seize (7)
- 15 Tells: makes connection (7)
- 17 Plant spine (5)
- 18 Bored, sated (3,2)
- 20 Mercy (4)

SOLUTION TO NO 1376

ACROSS

- 7 Affectionate 9 Boudoir 10 Salvo 11 Rail
- 12 Beholden 15 Svengali 17 Sufi 19 Wheel 21 Voyager
- 22 Twist one's arm

DOWN

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- 6 Reconnoitre 8 Aberystwyth 13 Drudgery 14 Agility
- 16 Living 18 Gypsy 20 Emit

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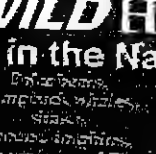


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MODERN MANNERS

by John Morgan

Send your queries to Morgan's Modern Manners, The Times, Weekend, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN

Q Before the practice becomes extinct, I would like to know if there is a correct way in which women should curtsy when presented to a member of the Royal Family. In particular, which leg should go back? Following lively debate while we awaited the arrival of HRH recently, my mother-in-law curtsied with her left leg, a friend curtsied with her right, and I got in a muddle. — Name and address withheld.

A The choice of leg is governed largely by comfort, although clever curtsies place the left leg in front of the right, making sure the right foot is half-bent and the left one placed flat on the ground in a slightly "turned out" position. It is important to bend at the knees (keeping them together) and not in the back, so that eye contact can be maintained.

Q Please could we have your views on the correct means for guests who are vegetarians. As a hostess, I will cook accordingly, and for other guests I will provide meat or fish in some form not overtly offensive to the vegetarian. But I have recently been told this is bad form and that the entire meal should be strictly vegetarian. It seems to me that one's main purpose in inviting guests is to create a good social atmosphere with food and wine that all will enjoy enormously. But how? — Mrs P. Wilford-Smith, Leobury, Herefordshire.



A This is political correctness gone too far; there is no need for your carnivorous friends to be unwitting victims of vegetarianism. After all, just as your non-meat eating guest would not be amused to be force-fed *filet de boeuf*, so well-mannered vegetarians will always strive to cause as little inconvenience as possible. The enlightened hostess should make various gastronomic gestures. These include a salad-based first course, imaginatively cooked vegetables, fish, poultry or game rather than red meat, no gelatine-based puddings and, if necessary, discrete vegetarian substitutes for meat dishes.

Q I feel that the letter from Mrs Morris (March 21) has highlighted a problem of our times. While accepting your reply, I find that it falls short of answering my particular case, as my "partner" in life is also my partner in business. If I introduce Caroline as my partner, it is assumed that I am only referring to our business relationship when, in fact, our commitment is much greater than that. — David R. Paton, Croydon, North Devon.

A Sadly I do not know of a suitable term, although I am

delighted to receive any suggestions. Many people preface "partner" with "business" when they wish to denote a professional arrangement rather than a private relationship, so I suggest you introduce Caroline as "my girlfriend and business partner".

Q We have a spate of fiftieth birthdays this year and have been to three in the past few months. When we arrive, presents are put on a side table, to open after we have departed. We have never had a thank-you note from anyone. We don't even know if they liked their presents. — Mrs J. M. Webb, Marlow, Bucks.

A The thank-you letter is known to be an endangered species among the ungrateful young, but to hear that it might be in a similar decline with the unappreciative middle-aged is sad indeed. Happily, polite people of all ages still send written thank-yous for presents received. These should be promptly dispatched: rather like rare blooms, thank-you letters lose their lustre the longer they are left.

Q I have tried to acquire wedding invitations with the wording "to" rather than "with", as you recently advised, ie, "Mr and Mrs X request the pleasure of your company at the marriage of their daughter Y to" rather than "with Mr Z". Most books of samples at stores have the wording "with". My grandmother, usually reliable on such matters, also insists "with" is correct. — Mrs Sarah Wise, Abingdon, Northampton.

A With all due respect to your grandmother, the use of "to" is considered much more elegant than "with". You must decide which model you feel more comfortable with.

Q When older and younger people of both sexes enter a restaurant, is it customary for the men of the party to go first or should the ladies do so? Are there any customs as to whether older or younger members of the party should go first? — Fren Finchley, London N3.

A This depends on whether a party is being led to the table by a member of staff or is making its own way. In the former case the employee would lead, followed by the female contingent (technically age would precede beauty), followed by the men in order of age, unless the elder is the host, in which case he would be last. In the latter model the most senior man or host will lead the way followed by the women with the second man entering last.

• The author is Associate Editor of GQ

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FLEAM
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b. A medallion
c. Mould

FORIANA
a. A dance form
b. Collection of writings
c. Flower arranging

Answers on page 35

TWO BRAINS

by Raymond Keene

I enjoy hearing from readers and would particularly like to hear from people who have established well-authenticated mental world records or who have comments or revisions on records published here. Chetan Shah of Wandsworth has written to point out that the number of seconds in 70 years, 17 days and 12 hours is 2,210,544,000, and not 2,210,500,800 (we had not allowed for the 12 hours).

Question 1: Who is the odd one out? Denkyen, Josephern, Hasingtown, Nontid, Linkranf

Question 2: Find the missing number:
35 37 13 5 3
36 25 9 ??

Answers on page 35

CROSS WORDS

by Brian Greer

A part from abbreviations, setters have other resources for dealing with fragments. Beginnings and endings of words offer great flexibility. Take a word like CHATTER, that can be broken into C + HATTER. We need definitions of HATTER and CHATTER, and some way of indicating C. HATTER suggests the mad character, and, checking the thesaurus, RABBIT conveniently pops up as a synonym for CHATTER. Staying with the emerging theme, C is the first letter of "Carroll". Put it all together: Rabbit created by Carroll, initially — one of his eccentric characters (7). "Initially" and "finally" are often obvi-

ous pointers to the first or last letter, but we can be more subtle. Instead of the hackneyed "young leader" Y could be "close of play", "journey's end", and so on — when possible, the expression should fit neatly with the rest of the clue. More generally, a letter in position may be pinpointed — Y could also be "fourth of July" or "Haydn's third". Centres of words may be single letters or more — "centre of gravity" for V, "sweetheart" for E (not everyone's cup of tea), "Heart of Midlothian" for OT or LOTH. Sometimes beginnings of several words may be combined, as in: Result of leaders of despotic organisation manipulating innocent people? (10) (an example

of an "8 Lit" clue, where the build-up serves simultaneously as the definition). The extreme case is the acronymic clue, in which the whole answer is a combination of first letters, thus Weapon appearing originally in "Casebook of Sherlock Holmes" (4). A similar play strings together last letters, as in: Clear conclusions reached by stern judge affect verdict (4). Yet another variant is to use alternate letters: Oath used in old parts of England (4). Used sparingly, any of these devices — provided it isn't too obvious — can yield an effective clue.

• The writer is Crossword Editor of The Times

PICTURE LINE



READERS are invited to suggest what was said when Tony Blair and his wife Cherie met the teenage winners of a foreign-office competition to be "Ambassador for the Day".

This picture will appear again next week with an entry chosen from those submitted.

Send "speech bubble" suggestions — only on postcards, please — with your name and address to Picture Line, Weekend, The Times, 1 Pennington Street, E1 9XN. The closing date is Wednesday, April 15.

Last week's winning caption, left, was submitted by Mrs Elizabeth Lloyd, of Braishfield, Hampshire.



QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"Zip me up before you go." — Sun headline on pop star George Michael's arrest for alleged sex act in a public lavatory

"Thank God for the paparazzi. They can kill but they can also save." — Rolling Stone Ron Wood after being rescued from a burning motorboat by photographers following him

"He should be sent away — to the Isle of Wight for instance." — East End mother on released paedophile Sidney Cooke

"This is no time for soundbites... I feel the hand of history on our shoulders." — Prime Minister Tony Blair on the Northern Ireland peace talks

"The best time (to have sex) was when there were flying operations because there is lots of noise." — Evidence at court-martial of Lieutenant-Colonel Commander Keith Pope accused of an affair with Lieutenant-Commander Karen Pearce

"Grant came back because he loves me, pure and simple." — Della Bovey after winning her husband back from television presenter Anthea Turner

"I think the Spice Girls are like a drug. It's like heroin... They can't help but absorb it, even if they are sick of it." — Geri "Ginger Spice" Halliwell suggests young fans are addicted to her band

"Frankly I take umbrage at this. It makes

us sound like a Third World village without any water." — Resident of Gloucester housing estate to which Oxford has sent an Indian aid worker

"The newspaper was aware when it published it that the biography was a spoof." — The Daily Telegraph refers to The Sunday Telegraph's reprinting on April 5 of long extracts from William Boyd's hoax biography of "artist" Nat Tate

ACROSS

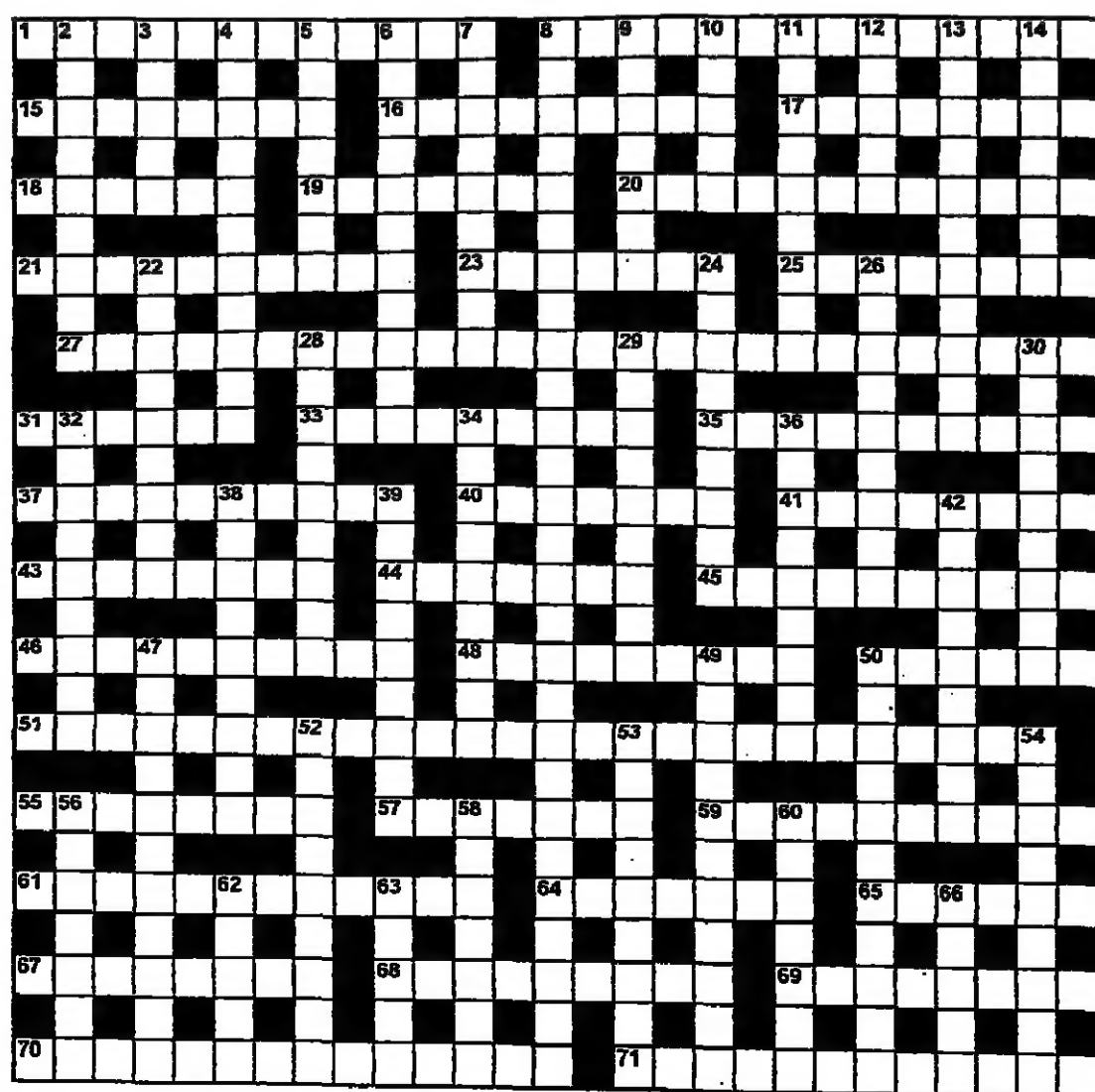
- Drugs sister provided, I said, not opened as planned (12)
- An obvious subject for physical education (7,7)
- Widespread destruction Moses saw? (8)
- Wentworth's change of heart in poet's biography (9)
- One climbs the mountain, roped to others in a line (5,3)
- It's not even a curiosity (6)
- Class concerned with reproducing sound of Monteverdi (7)
- Military planners give stick to senior officer (7,5)
- Obstinate, mischievous type going in drunk to excess (4,4)
- Baker and I search vigorously around outside (8)
- Twice as much hard work involved in production of The Three Sisters (6,6,4,3,7)
- Homeless figure one extracted from papers (6)
- Works parties (9)
- Give me a call to check method of measuring energy (10)
- Main course that's not hot requested all over the place (10)
- Checks money invested by newly-weds (7)
- In them, girl serving drinks may have less than all her wits about her (8)
- A character taken out of the history book (8)
- Mineral springs here — I'll go, having drunk small volume (7)
- Break even, having such an apartment (5,5)
- Bosses give contract to worker about to leave (10)
- Sort of truck, a means of transport to place far from battlefield (9)
- Bench agree to close case (6)
- Was treading a fine line, if one was honest (4,2,3,8,3,6)
- Unusual fruit not wholly swallowed by a little creature (9)
- From East, letter in Greek written by saint with extremes of love (7)
- Clearly say one's made of small pieces? Not at first (10)
- Be wounded in battle formation — about to come round (4,4,4)
- Some trollop I petted in the tube (7)
- Object magically produced communication right away (6)
- Drink taken in successive stages of one's round, say (3,3)
- British prayer for drier weather? That's stupid (9)
- On which part of paper is put to work? (5,3)
- Evidence of steps taken by group of high churchmen (6,3)
- Festival being promoted when people were up in Dublin (6,6)

DOWN

- Civil warrior using ammunition with intelligence (9)
- One expected by leaders of Muslims, and hoped-for deliverer, indeed (5)
- Silly dream I interpreted for James's girl (5,6)
- Peregrine finds electricity unreliable, after abandoning big town (7)
- Be restless, needing instructions for pancake-making? (4,3,4)
- Took a risk with Satanic practices? He may have (9)
- Try to advise gently how to avoid breaking a pencil? (3,2,3,3,4,1,5,4,2)
- Felt old, grabbed by ruffian and heartlessly hurt (7)
- Managed to hold party for noble element (5)
- Torn and tatty work criticised (9)
- Secretive group once known by their initials (5)
- Charge one with capital offence? (11)
- Slope off, receiving fine for book removed from a house (7)
- A boundary? Twenty of them (9)
- Dotty technique used in naivety (9)
- Most searching finds weapon in sniper's lair (9)
- Protection queen received as courtesy (9)
- Lines once carved into cheek (9)
- Largely an arrangement of throat muscles (9)
- Arrange a facing, using needlepoint? (9)
- One making lists is forbidden eventually to speak (9)
- Put on show, but failed to include second act (9)
- Unconscious wife shortly killed — suspicion initially introduced by malignant spirit (9)
- Confess a time disadvantageous, when some characters come over for coffee (9)
- Sort of US college for which one's chosen by examination (9)
- Outstanding piece of sculpture appears evil — too real, perhaps? (4,7)
- Sectarians have stories, Saint John's among them (11)
- Royal Court's formal procedure over warning (4,7)
- Fork out perhaps to deal with this tricky problem (3,6)
- Restore calm, say — it's secured at last (9)
- Weaken Adams' work, removing the craft (5,4)
- Potter hit runs — not at first a boundary (7)
- Repeating one note at speed (7)
- Showhouse maybe containing many well-painted flats (7)
- Famous school brought up daughter (5)
- I'm sad, lacking money to give inspiration (5)
- Demand to see papers (5)

EASTER JUMBO CROSSWORD 159

In our bumper Easter Jumbo Crossword competition, a prize of £100 will be awarded for the first correct solution opened on Thursday, April 23, 1998. Entries should be sent to: Easter Jumbo 159, The Times, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN. The winner and solution will be published in Weekend on Saturday April 25.



NAME

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

Times Two Crossword
Easter Jumbo

There is no prize for this crossword. The solution will be published on Monday, April 13

ACROSS

- Opposite numbers (12)
- Laurence Sterne novel (8,6)
- Water tortoise (8)
- Diversion (9)
- Clap into jail (8)
- To mount (6)
- Short operatic solo (7)
- Verse form of eg Racine (12)
- Causing puzzlement (10)
- Concert by soloist (7)
- Area outside visible spectrum (5,3)
- Got in first with same speech (4,3,5,3,2,4,5)
- Absent-minded (6)
- Hindu love manual (9)
- Proverbially squashed container (7,3)
- Lined up wrong (10)
- Seagull playwright (7)
- Peeking: grazing (blow) (8)
- Supranational police (8)
- Bills: sounds like verifies (7)
- Type of ballpoint pen (10)
- Put to rights, into sequence (3,2,5)
- (Univ.) finals results (5,4)
- Send away (6)
- Twice the price, painted (5,5,8,8)
- Loud cries (8)
- Glossy coating (7)
- Extensively (spread) (3,3,4)
- Surpassing (understanding) (12)
- Limp (7)
- Subjects of debate (6)
- Praise: an honour (8)
- Eliza — Pygmalion flower-seller (9)
- It showers happy couple (8)
- Repair of body appearance (7,7)
- Lack of mercy (12)

DOWN

- Went beyond budget (9)
- Care for, tend to (5)
- Suitably, beneficially (11)
- One from Lahore, Chandigarh (7)
- Old British Museum study area (7,4)
- Protected (window) (9)
- Nutcracker celesta solo (Tchaikovsky) (3,5,2,3,5,4,5)
- Approximate (7)
- Heading (5)
- Stir, anxiety (9)
- Tasting pleasant (5)
- One bought by the unwary (1,3,2,1,4)
- Bishop's area (7)
- Prone (in eg submission) (9)
- Pool guard; great relief (fig.) (4,5)
- Enchant (9)
- Excited, set on fire (9)
- Packing cases (3,6)
- Mus. instruments: math. figures (9)
- Set of customers (9)
- One given unthinking protection (6,3)
- Verdi hunchback jester opera (9)
- On spur of moment (9)
- Concerned with dogma (9)
- Air stewards (5,4)
- Humiliating (11)
- Working poorly (11)
- (US) solid old apartment blocks (11)
- Those unable to be here (9)
- Wind from Siberia (5,6)
- Devotes: inscribes (9)
- As Golden Treasury poetry (7)
- Positive terminal (7)
- Fundamental (7)
- S. Am. mammal, raccoon like (5)
- A tree church official (5)
- Look after feathers (5)